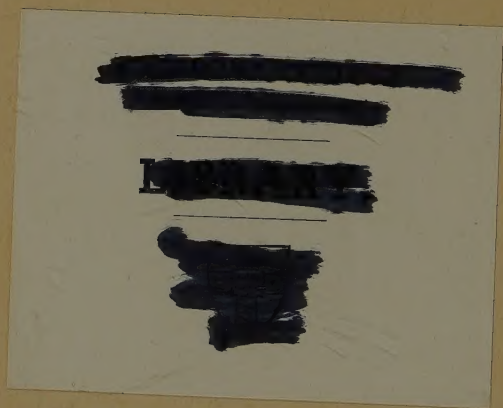


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PEARLS AND PEPPER



Pearls & Pepper

By Robert Palfrey Utter



"The best part of the world topsiturvied . . .
for the traffic of pearls and pepper."
Montaigne; *Of Coaches*.



New Haven : Yale University Press

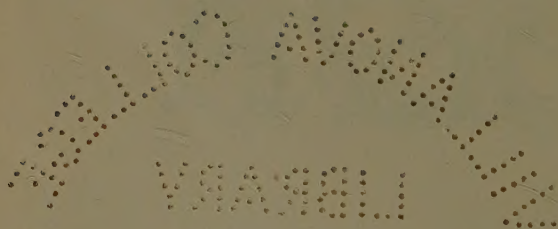
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To the Readers of This Book

(if any such there be), it will be readily apparent that for the major part of the performance I have no one but myself to blame—but I have many to thank. For permission to reprint these essays, I wish to express my gratitude to the publishers of the various magazines in which they have appeared; to the National Weekly Corporation for Winter Mist, Of Woodpiles, The Trembling Year, "Soldier, Soldier, Come from the Wars," The Ship's Library, and The Fisherman's Path; to Harper & Brothers for My Neighbor and Myself, The Case against Grammar, The Laocoön of the Shoe-Lacings, Progress in Pronunciation, and The Idiom of Democracy (which they call Our Upstart Speech); to the Century Company for Of Stone Walls, and The Pup-Dog; to The New York Evening Post for The Pup-Boy, and Lear's Characters; to The Nation for The Most Contemplative Man's Recreation, and William De Morgan; to the Atlantic Monthly Company for The Simple Spellers; to The Sewanee Review, Inc., for The Work of Thomas Hardy; and to the University of California Press for On the Alleged Tediousness of Defoe and Richardson.

And if it should trouble anyone that at one time I appear to esteem fancy skating as the finest of non-competitive sports, and at another fly-fishing, he must get over the difficulty as best he may; to me it does not seem insuperable.

R. P. U.

Berkeley, September, 1923.

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Contents.

The Pup-Dog	I
The Case against Grammar	10
Winter Mist	29
William De Morgan	35
My Neighbor and Myself	48
The Most Contemplative Man's Recreation	54
The Idiom of Democracy	61
The Pup-Boy	82
Of Woodpiles	87
The Laocoön of the Shoe-Lacings	98
The Trembling Year	113
Of Stone Walls	119
"Soldier, Soldier, Come from the Wars—"	130
The Ship's Library	140
Progress in Pronunciation	148
Lear's Characters	172
The Work of Thomas Hardy	178
The Fisherman's Path	194
On the Alleged Tediousness of Defoe and Richardson	200
The Simple Spellers	228



The Pup-Dog.

ANY dog is a pup-dog so long as he prefers a rat, dead or alive, to chocolate fudge, a moldy bone to sponge cake, a fight with a woodchuck to hanging round the tea-table for sweet biscuit. Of course he will show traits of age as years advance, but usually they are physical traits, not emotional. For the most part, dogs' affections burn warmly, and their love of life and experience brightly, while life lasts. They remain young as poets do. Every dog is a pup-dog, but some are more so than others.

Most so of all is the Irish terrier. To me he stands as the archetype of the dog, and the doggier a dog is the better I like him. I love the collie—none better. I have lived with him and ranged the hills with him in every kind of weather they afford, and you can hardly tell me a story of his loyalty and intelligence that I cannot go you one better. But the collie is a gentleman—he has risen from the ranks, to be sure, but he is every inch the gentleman—and just now I am speaking of dogs. The terrier is every inch a dog, and the Irish is the terrier *par excellence*. The man who mistakes him for an Airedale (as many do) is one who does not know an Irishman from a

Pearls and Pepper.

Scot. The Airedale has a touch of the national dourness; I believe that he is a Calvinist at heart, with a severe sense of personal responsibility. The Airedale takes his romance and his fighting as seriously as an Alan Breck. The Irish terrier has all the imagination and humor of his race; he has a rollicking air; he is whimsical, warm-hearted, jaunty, and has the gift of blarney. He loves a scrimmage better than his dinner, but he bears no malice.

“His fellest earthly foes,
Cats, he does but affect to hate.”

The terrier family is primarily a jolly and good-natured crowd whose business in life is to dig into the lairs of burrowing creatures and fight them in close, narrow quarters. The signal for the fight is the attack on the intrusive nose. You can read this family history in the pup-dog's treatment of the cat. The household cat with whom he is brought up, he rallies with good-humored banter, but he is less likely to hurt her than she him. He will take her with him on his morning round of the neighborhood garbage pails, and even warm her kittens on his back as he lies in the square of sunshine on the kitchen floor till they begin to knead their tiny claws into him in a futile search for nourishment; then he shakes them patiently off and seeks rest elsewhere. He will chase any cat so long as she will run; if she refuses to run he will dance round her and bark, trying to get up a

The Pup-Dog.

game—"Be a sport," he taunts her, "take a chance!" But if she claws his nose, she treads on the tail of his coat, and no true Irish gentleman will stand for that. His tactics with human creatures are much the same. He will try a small bluff to see if he can start anything. If his victim shows signs of fear he redoubles his effort, his tail the while signalling huge delight at his success. If the victim shows fight, he may develop the attack in earnest. The victim who shows either fear or fight betrays complete ignorance of dog nature, for the initial bluff is always naïvely transparent; the pup-dog may have a poker face, but his tail is a rank traitor. A nest of yellow-jackets in a hole in the ground challenges his every instinct. He cocks his ear at the subterranean buzzing, tries a little tentative excavation with cautious paw. Soon one of the inmates scores on the tip of his nose, and war is declared in earnest. There are leaping attacks with clashing of teeth, and wildly gyrating rear-guard actions. Custom cannot stale the charm of the spot; all summer, so long as there is a wing stirring, hornets shall be hot i' the mouth.

The degree of youth which the pup-dog attains and holds is that of the human male of eleven or twelve years. He nurses an inextinguishable quarrel with the hair-brush. His hatred of the formal bath is chronic, but he will paddle delightedly in any casual water out of doors regardless of temperatures and seasons. At home he will sometimes scoff at plain,

Pearls and Pepper.

wholesome food, but to the public he gives the impression that his family systematically starve him, and his dietetic experiments sometimes have weird and disastrous results. You can never count on his behavior except on formal occasions, when you know to a certainty that he will disgrace you. His curiosity is equalled only by his adroitness in getting out of awkward situations into which it plunges him. His love of play is unquenchable by weariness or hunger; there is no time when the sight of a ball will not rouse him to clamorous activity.

For fine clothes he has a satiric contempt, and will almost invariably manage to land a dirty footprint on white waistcoat or "ice-cream pants" in the first five minutes of their immaculacy. But if when you dress in the morning, you drag from the closet breeches and boots "stained with each variation of the soil" within your tramping radius, one whiff of them goes to his head like wine, and he remains in a state of inebriation, scarcely able to taste his breakfast, till the expedition starts for the hills. He is one hundred per cent motor-minded; when he is "stung with the splendor of a sudden thought," he springs to immediate action. In the absence of ideas he relaxes and sleeps with the abandon of a jute door-mat.

Dog meets dog as boy meets boy, with assertions of superiority, challenge, perhaps fight, followed by friendship and play. No wonder that with pup-boys

The Pup-Dog.

he is so completely at one; his code is their code, whither they go he goes—except to school. With September come the dull days for him. No more the hordes of pirates and bandits with bandannas and peaked hats, belts stuck full of dirks and “ottermaticks” sweep up and down the sidewalks on bicycles in open defiance of the law, raiding gardens and lawns, scattering shrieking tea-parties of little girls and dolls, haling them aboard the lugger in the next lot and holding them for fabulous ransom—there is always someone who will pay it with an imposing looking cheque signed “Theodore Wilson Roosevelt Woodrow Rockefeller.” With the pirate crew the pup-dog is in his element. He prances with flopping ears beside the flying wheels, crouches in ambush, gives tongue in the raid, flies at the victims and tears their frocks, mounts guard in the cave, and shares the bandits’ last crust. But a September day for him begins after school and ends with supper; for the rest of the day the pirates are orderly citizens. With his paws on the window-sill, his nose making misty spots on the glass, he watches them as they march away in the morning, then he makes his perfunctory round of the neighborhood, inspecting garbage pails and unwary cats. After that there is nothing to do but flop down in the September sunshine and exist in a coma till the return of the pirates—except for his routine attempt to intimidate the

Pearls and Pepper.

iceman and the postman; perhaps he might succeed some happy day, who knows?

In the open the pup-dog is the best of companions, for his exuberant vitality and unquenchable zest for things in general give him endless variety. There are times, perhaps, when you see little of him; he uses you as a mobile base of operations; he runs an epicycloidal course with you as moving centre, and all you see of him is the flash of his tail on one horizon or the flop of his ears on the other. You hear his wild cries of excitement when he starts a squirrel or a rabbit. By rare luck you may be called in time to referee a fight with a woodchuck, or once in a happy dog's age you may see him as a khaki streak through the brush in pursuit of a fox. At last you hear the drumming of his feet on the road behind you; he shoots past before he can shift his gears, wheels, and lands a running jump on your diaphragm by way of reporting himself present for duty. Thereafter he sticks a little closer, popping out into the road at intervals of two or three hundred yards, or thrusting his towzled face through the leaves, to make sure you are still on the planet. Then you may enjoy his indefatigable industry in counting with his nose (his tail quivering with delight) the chinks of old stone walls. You may light your pipe and sit by for an hour as he energetically follows his family tradition in digging under an old stump, shooting the sand out behind with kangaroo strokes, tugging at the roots

The Pup-Dog.

with his teeth, and pausing from time to time to grin at you with a yard of dripping tongue completely surrounded by leaf mold. You may admire his zeal as inspector of chipmunks, mice, frogs, grasshoppers, crickets and such small deer; anything that lives and tries to get away from him is fair game—except chickens. If round the turn of the road he plumps into the midst of a hen convention, memories of bitter humiliations surge up within him, and he blushes and turns his face aside. Other dogs he meets with growling, bristling and tentative tail-wagging by way of assertion that he will meet them on any terms they like, fight or frolic, it is all one to him.

You cannot win his allegiance by feeding him, though he always has his bit of blarney ready for the cook. He loves all members of the family with nice discrimination for their weaknesses—the pup-boy who cannot resist an invitation to romp, the pup-girl who cannot withstand begging blandishments of nose and paw, but will subvert discipline and share food with him whenever and wherever she has it. He will welcome with leapings and gyrations any one of them after a day's absence or an hour's. But his whole-souled allegiance is to the head of the house; his is the one voice that speaks with authority, his the first welcome always when the family returns in a group. That allegiance burning bright and true to the last spark of life, that unfailing welcome on which a man can count more surely than on any

Pearls and Pepper.

human love—indeed, there is no secret in a man's love for a dog, however we may wonder at the dog's love for the man. Let Argos and Ulysses stand as the type of it, although to me there is somewhat lacking, not in the image of the dog, but in the conduct of the man. Were I disguised for peril of my life, and my dog after the wanderings and dangers of so many years lifted his head and knew me and then died, I think no craft could withhold my feelings from betraying me.

“Dogs know their friends,” we say, as if there were mystery in the knowledge. The password of the fraternity is not hidden; you may hear it anywhere. It was spoken at my own hearth when the pup-dog, wet with autumn rain, thrust himself between my guests and the andirons and began to steam. My guest checked my remonstrance. “Don't disturb him on my account; you know”—apologetically—“I rather like the smell of a wet dog.” The word revealed a background that made the speaker at once and forever my guest-friend. In it I saw boy and dog in rain and snow on wet trails, their camp in narrow shelter, where they snuggle together with all in common that they have of food and warmth. He who shared his boyhood with a pup-dog will always share whatever is his with members of the fraternity. He will value the wagging of a stubby tail above all dog-show points and parlor tricks. He will not be rash to chide affectionate importunity, nor to set for his dog higher

The Pup-Dog.

standards than he upholds for himself. Do you never nurse a grouch and express it in appropriate language? Do you never take direct action when your feelings get away with you? When the like befalls the pup-dog, have ready for him such sympathy as he has always ready for you in your moods. Treat him as an equal, and you will get from him human and imperfect results.

You will never know exactly what your pup-dog gets from you; he tries wistfully to tell you, but leaves you still wondering. But you may have from him a share of his perennial puphood, and you do well to accept it gratefully whenever he offers it. Take it when it comes, though the moment seem inopportune. You may be roused just as you settle for a nap by a moist nose thrust into your hand, two rough brown paws on the edge of your bunk, a pair of bright eyes peering through a jute fringe. Up he comes and steps over you, and settles down between you and the wall with a sigh. Then if you shut your eyes, you will find you are not far from that place up on the hill—the big rock and the two oaks—where the pup-boy that used to be you used to snuggle down with that first old pup-dog you ever had.



The Case against Grammar.

THE case against grammar is one on which the professor perpetually holds open hearings. He passes, for example, the bulletin-board where he has posted the next assignment for "Sophomore English." The victims are copying the list of poems, one calling off the titles, the others scribbling in their note-books.

"The Grammarian's Funeral," calls the announcer. Everyone responds.

"Looks good to me." "I'll say she do." "When are they going to pull it off?" "Ought to run it in the movies; it'd draw like a chimney."

Again, as Acting-Critic-in-General to his friends, the professor gets a letter from a popular writer asking for "unsparing criticism" of his latest work. The writer suffers, as a friend should, in chastened silence, till the professor touches on a point of grammar, then the galled jade winces. "What good is grammar anyway?" he writes, and in pungent terms condemns the whole body of its lore to the everlasting bonfire. He quotes with glee the impassioned sage who said, "When the English language gets in my way, so much the worse for the English language." The letter closes with a postscript, "Kindly

The Case against Grammar.

tell me to settle a bet whether both verbs in the following sentence should be plural . . .”

He might, then, have admitted that grammar has one use, to settle bets—if there had really been any bet to settle; but there was not. The writer asked the question because he wanted to know. The tirade against grammar was nervous bravado, as a dog barks to cover a strategic retreat. The noise of such barking as his reaches the professor, the modern representative of the medieval grammarian, from many sides. If what he hears from the world beyond his study walls be typical, nine persons out of ten shy at the word *grammar* like nervous colts, or prance round the subject as does a puppy round a snapping-turtle, threatening it with ghastly retribution for its sins without so much as knowing what its sins may be, unable either to conquer it once for all, or to let it alone.

The grievance is an ancient one; the feeling which would make the grammarian's funeral a joyful occasion to most of mankind is so old that it might almost be an inherited instinct. Probably no one knows just when the trouble began, but we know that there was a grammar school in Rome about two thousand years ago, and that by the time we get to the Middle Ages grammar is invested with all its terrors. By that time the word represented to the popular mind all the mystery of learning; learning which the people denounced as useless and feared at the same time, be-

Pearls and Pepper.

cause they knew not what advantage over them it might give to its possessors. They could conceive of no advantage save the material one, and no mystery save magic. Virgil, whose name they heard on the lips of cleric and scholar, became to their minds the arch necromancer, not as a tribute to the magic of his poetry, for that they could not read. All learning was in Latin, and grammar was the key to it. Just as Virgil becomes the magician in the eyes of the people, so "gramarye" comes to mean magic, the one mystery of which the unlettered folk know more than do any others, but which they constantly attribute to the learned who know nothing more of it than what they learn from the people. Among medieval grammarians, as among the modern, sound scholars were in the minority; the others did what they could to inflate their mystery and to make the most of the popular misconception of learning. As time went on and learning slowly spread, increasing numbers of boys learned grammar only to hate it. To them it represented only years of torture, the agonizing process of attempted mental effort under the lash. Dogs have terrified cats for unnumbered centuries; small wonder if blind new kittens bristle at a whiff of the hereditary enemy. Are not nineteen or twenty centuries of pedagogical terrorizing enough to make a new-born child howl at a musty whiff of grammar, or double its fists at the sight of a grammarian?

Grammar is to most of us an elusive mystery,

The Case against Grammar.

maddening as a mosquito, real when it stings, but nothing to grasp. The beginner is apt to get the impression from his teacher that its rules are unwavering, and that whoso breaks the smallest of its laws is cast into the outer darkness. Then he notices that the minister in the pulpit says "don't" where he should say "doesn't," and no consuming wrath either from above or below comes to destroy him. He catches "the best people" tripping in their speech, and even Teacher herself one memorable day spoke in class of the *best* of *two* exercises! He begins to defy the gods. "You can't say 'It is me,'" says Teacher. "Can't I?" he retorts, "just you watch me." He decides that Teacher's gods are only a set of little grinning clay images on a shelf in the schoolroom. With a sweeping gesture he sends them crashing from their perch, and walks out a free man. Free he remains, until he discovers that his stenographer is disdainfully correcting his lapses in grammar, that some of his customers set him down a notch or two on account of his manners of speech, that he needs grammar in his business. Then he feels about it as Silas Lapham did about the white gloves. He feels that its etiquette is slight, trivial, contemptible; he hates it, and himself that he is baffled by it. He would gladly wrestle with it and throw it, but when he seeks to grasp it, it vanishes. He knows that there are limits beyond which he does not wish to go in his freedom in language, but he cannot find them.

Pearls and Pepper.

They shift and recede like the shore in a fog, which you bump when you wish to avoid it and seek in vain when you wish to land. It is at about this point in his linguistic experience that he becomes the linguistic Bolshevik; driven frantic by the high cost of grammatical experience and the impossibility of acquiring wherewithal to meet its demands, he wishes he could destroy grammar, and after it is gone enjoy in peace all its benefits.

If the layman turns to the grammarian for help, he is not likely to get it. Any grammarian will give reasons that look sound for preferring this construction to that, but they do not wear well; you soon find them unsatisfactory. In the first place, you soon discover that what you want is facts, not reasons. The real question is not "Why *should* we say this rather than that?" but "*Do* we say this, or do we say that?" In the second place, the reason you get from one grammarian is promptly discredited by another. Professor A tells you to use construction X because it has been in continuous good use for five hundred years. B prefers Y because it is analogous to another construction. C votes for Z because "a majority of our best writers and speakers" use it. Each argument is good so far as it goes, but it is not final, nor are all three together necessarily so. The historical argument has weight; if we know that a construction has been in use for centuries, we know at least that it has proved useful, and we may think twice before we

The Case against Grammar.

discard it at the word of the purist. But we do not cling to all we have once had; if we did we should still speak Anglo-Saxon. The argument from analogy is good in so far as uniformity is desirable, but it is not a law; we do not reject all constructions for which other constructions do not give us precedent. As for good usage, grant that it is the usage of a majority of our best writers and speakers, the question remains, What do they actually say or write? What court shall determine who they are, and appoint tellers to poll them? The arguments of the grammarians have been reduced to a whirligig (by Professor H. T. Peck) in the following form:

Q. Does the passive verb admit an object after it?

A. Yes, the passive verb admits an object after it, because people use it that way.

Q. Why is it right for people to use it that way?

A. Because the passive verb admits an object after it.

If this be grammar, the layman is justified in rejecting it, but it is not; only half of it is grammar, the rest is etiquette.

The rebel who condemns grammar to the flames is justly called a Bolshevik because democracy is not democratic enough for him. He is like the cat-that-walks-by-himself in that he wishes all benefits without any restraints or duties. His party is smaller but more noisy than that of the Agnostics, who do

Pearls and Pepper.

not know enough about grammar to hold any opinions of their own, but accept with dyspeptic grace such crumbs of fact and doctrine as they can gather from others. There are the Democrats, who hold that majority rules in Grammarland, therefore all that is is right. There are the Puritans who hold that almost everything that is is wrong; that the only good grammar is dead grammar, the kind no one uses (like the "best room" of our grandmothers, which was good for nothing but a funeral); that we should seek to accord our wills with that of the grammar book; that none have attained grace but themselves and their wives, and sometimes they have doubt about their wives. There are the Royalists who believe in the divine right of the grammarians to make the rules as they should be and enforce them with thunder and guns on the lesser folk who walk in darkness. Perhaps not all of us belong to these parties. Perhaps only half of us are barking at grammar and most of us are barking at one another. The parties represent only in the crudest way the main divisions of opinion; there are countless shades of thought and feeling. The main point is that nearly everyone has a grievance, either against grammar or against those who hold some heretical view of grammar.

For one of the fundamental difficulties of the situation there is no possible remedy; it is that grammar got so long a start of the grammarians. Its origin goes back beyond all records, but it is easy to see that

The Case against Grammar.

it was invented by an anthropoid who used one kind of grunt to mean peace and another to mean war, and the only survivors were those who understood him. Naturally they copied his system, and it soon became bad form to talk any other. We do not know just when this inventor lived, but it might have been about three hundred thousand years ago. His system was practised and developed for perhaps two hundred and ninety-four thousand years before we have the slightest trace of it on record. By that time, some six or seven thousand years ago, languages were so numerous and so well developed that the users of them resorted to such images as the Tower of Babel to express the state of linguistic chaos in which they found themselves. And still it was two or three thousand years before anybody paid any attention to it (worth mentioning), or tried to train it in the way it should go. Even then they spent nearly five hundred years quarrelling as to the proper method. So we must infer that grammar led a wild, untutored life for approximately two hundred and ninety-eight thousand years; how could its trainers expect to reform it in a paltry two thousand, especially since they have never fully agreed on the way to go about it? The controversy flared up almost as soon as there were any grammarians, between the Democrats and the Royalists, the Anomalists and the Analogists, as they were then called. The Democrats insisted that there were no rules of grammar in any proper

Pearls and Pepper.

sense of the word. The Royalists declared that there were. After some four hundred years of foray and reprisal the Royalists were declared the winners. There were rules, the decision announced, but the rules, being only mortal, were unfortunately subject to a malady known as exceptions. The two parties were never really united, and their offspring were what might be expected—Puritan and Bolshevik, nervous fanatics, carrying their parents' worst traits to extremes, and the rickety Agnostic.

If we search among the parties for the truth we shall find it, but not all of it in the possession of any one. When the Democrat declares that all that is is right, he says sooth if he means that the grammarian should record facts rather than issue decrees. If he means that one way of putting words together is in no way to be preferred to another, he is wrong, for different ways of speech have their various effects on divers hearers, and the consequences according to these effects are more or less to be desired. If he means that the rules of grammar are not even safe as generalizations, he is wrong, for the main facts are widely and firmly established by centuries of usage. If he means that our speech may safely be left to itself to develop as chance or unconscious human nature may direct, very likely he is right, but he seems to neglect the fact that for as many centuries as the records cover the conservative force has been one of the "natural" forces in the shaping of lan-

The Case against Grammar.

guage. If he admits this, but asserts that so far as the conservative force has been effective it has worked for evil, he is probably wrong. At least it affords wholesome opposition for the radicals, and tests for their innovations.

The Puritan, the ultra-conservative, is right in recognizing that time and usage are the tests of language; his mistake is in condemning the constructive elements. He is within his rights if he chooses to frown on every construction that cannot show a century or two of good usage, but if he would make this procedure the rule for all, he would condemn the language to death, and it is not unjust to say of him that he believes that there is no good grammar but dead grammar, for no language can live without growing.

The Royalist of to-day conceals under the name of "science" or the plea of "logic" his belief in the divine right of the grammarian to issue decrees. Here, for example, is one of his proclamations:

"Grammar is a science or nothing. It has the outward form of a science and its difficulties spring out of its scientific character. There are definitions to be framed, principles to be stated, rules to be prescribed, all of which operations, if entered upon at all, should be carried on in a scientific spirit. A loose way of proceeding in this respect fails to answer the

Pearls and Pepper.

ends of grammar, and fails still more as mental discipline."

The phrasing is modern enough—the passage is from a preface of Bain's dated 1872—but the position the grammarian takes differs in nothing essential from that of the Analogists of the beginning of the Christian Era. Here are the questions that divided the main parties twenty centuries ago, and that divide them to-day. Is grammar a science? Has it any rules? Is it the right, the duty, the privilege, of the grammarian to "prescribe rules" for mankind in the use of language?

"Grammar is a science or nothing," we read in the preface. Then if we find in the text nothing but commandments, most of them in negative form, we are apt to take the grammarian at his word. "This is not science," we say, "therefore it is nothing." Grammar is not a science if it is a table of commandments. It is not a science if by science we mean a body of facts that stay in their categories without variableness or shadow of turning. It has no rules if by rules we mean universal laws. But if this is what we mean by science, there is no science save that which deals with things inorganic, inert, dead, like sand, sulphuric acid, figures. What law of life has man ever discovered but death? If the autocratic grammarian is willing to admit that there is no good language but dead language, we may leave him to do his work on

The Case against Grammar.

such language as he considers proper for his operations. Autopsy is easier than vivisection, and more humane. But language is not inorganic nor dead; it is as vital as life itself; its evolution is mysteriously creative, as baffling at its crucial turns as the shifting forms of life, as little subject to any laws that man can frame. Now, merely because it is baffling we do not deny to biology the name of science, nor to what we might, if we speak in general terms, call its special fields, psychology and anthropology. In these fields we find the roots of grammar, for it is deeply rooted in the nature of man and the world about him. Of quackery every branch of science has had its share, but the chemistry of to-day is not discredited by the alchemy of yesterday. Grammar should not suffer from the presumption of those who give its name to their personal taboos. Grammar is a science in so far as it attempts to collect and arrange facts about language. If it can draw universal laws, or even general principles from the facts, that too is science, so far as it goes. But it is not science to declare that one fact is "right" and another is "wrong." It is not science to try to turn a generalization into a universal by declaring with tears or anathemas or both that we *must* obey it. A true universal takes care of itself because it is what it is by the very nature of things, and cannot be otherwise. A "scientific law" that requires penalties and threats for its enforcement carries its brand of counterfeit on its face. To frame

Pearls and Pepper.

definitions may be a scientific process if it is scientifically done, but to prescribe rules is the poorest sort of pedagogy. And to say that unless we make our grammar thus and so it fails as mental discipline is like saying that mountains must have no grades of less than ten per cent or they are useless as gymnasiums. Grammar is a science when it deals with facts; it may be a science when it deals with theories; but when it deals with commandments, it is nothing but a book of etiquette.

The question of science is closely akin to the question of logic. Is grammar logical? Ought it to be so? Can it be "right" to govern one verb with an adjective and another with an adverb? In other words, if grammar is not logical, should we not make it so? The question is essentially the one that was answered in the second century A.D., by the decision that grammar has rules but they are subject to exceptions, and again by the logician who declares that the "science" of the grammarian functions when he promulgates rules. His work reminds one of that of the "topiary artist" who tortures a box tree into the shape of an eagle and keeps it so by trimming it once a month; he may do so till he and the tree are both dead, but he can never make a box tree grow of itself into the shape of an eagle. Grammar is logical if we study it scientifically; we find causes to account for so many of the facts that we are sure there are causes for all of them if we could find them. But that is not what

The Case against Grammar.

the logical grammarian means; what he wants is uniformity. He tries to find it in rules, and to make it where it does not exist by proclaiming rules of his own invention. If we consider what we know and may believe of the history of grammar, we need not be surprised that it is not logical, but rather that it is as logical as it is. Not being persons of ideal intelligence ourselves, we can hardly imagine what our forefathers might have done with grammar if they had been so. Perhaps they would have made it absolutely uniform in all its processes; perhaps they would have attained some higher ideal inconceivable to our little minds. Shall we take in vain the sacred name of progress by complaining that our ancestors were not more intelligent than we? Might we not more becomingly challenge our own intelligence? If grammar were logical, would it fit us? We should probably be like a man with a thirty-four chest and a forty-four waist trying to wear a suit of clothes like the one in the poster, with shoulders at once lady-like and Herculean, and melting curves about the waist. Language is a pretty close measure of a people's intelligence; it will fit us whatever we do. If we do not like what we see in the mirror, if the books that record the facts of our language are not pleasant reading, we cannot expect to improve matters much by direct action, by legislation; we must look to ourselves. But the truth is that if we have a proper mirror we need not be violently dissatisfied with what

Pearls and Pepper.

we see. The desirable standard is as much uniformity as is compatible with sound growth and proper flexibility. Some such standard English has already attained if we may take the word of the foreign scholars who praise it as second only to Chinese in point of its logical system of grammar, and at the same time as more flexible than most European languages.

If this is the Bolshevik's ideal, then indeed the truth is with him. One can hardly tell whether it is so or not, for he does not explain, he does not argue; he merely thunders. If the wall will not fall down for the blowing of trumpets, if the army will not flee for the smashing of crockery, why, let the smashing of crockery go on—something must be smashed; better our own lamps and pitchers than nothing. He wishes to destroy grammar because he feels it as a restraint, and since we never hear of anything he would offer to take over its service, he leaves the impression that he wishes the destruction not as a general benefit to mankind, but as a personal convenience to himself. He cares not how others may speak, and does not see why anyone should care how he speaks; he thinks of speech as an individual matter, which in its very nature it is not. It is a community matter; its very essence is in its relations with others. The Bolshevik party represents an important part of the motive power that urges us on, but it is not sufficient in itself. Mere power will take us nowhere without

The Case against Grammar.

means of application, steering gear, an intelligent hand.

From out the clamor of voices we may listen in vain for any clear word to tell us what collectively we really want. We cannot take a poll, and to try to determine by other means is as uncertain as are forecasts before an election. But there are a few facts which may shape such guesses as we can make. First, we do well to remind ourselves that language is the most democratic institution on earth. It was made by the people for their own use, probably without clear consciousness of what they were about for by far the greater part of its history. It is perpetually subject to the initiative and referendum; if the people do not like it, they change it unconsciously. The grammarians cannot prevent this; the tyranny of grammar is not with them; it is the tyranny of habit, the tyranny of custom, the tyranny of fashion, the tyranny of democracy. When the schoolboy finds that the laws of grammar are not backed by tangible executive power, he thinks they have no teeth of any sort. Before long he finds that they are worse than laws enforced by the police, being defended by penalties ranging from misunderstanding through varying degrees of social obloquy to downright ostracism. So far as he is concerned, the authority is external; he is conscious of no part in forming the rules, nor does he feel the slightest power in his influence to change them. The fact is obvious, however, that grammar

Pearls and Pepper.

does change, and the people change it. It changes so slowly that even a generation is scarcely aware of the fact, but if we look back down the centuries it is so obvious that to mention it is a platitude. English grammar of King Alfred's time we learn as if it were that of a foreign language. By the end of the fourteenth century it seems somewhat more familiar, but students have been known to declare that they found French or German grammar easier than the phonology and accident of Chaucer's English. Two hundred years more make the change from Middle English to Modern English; a schoolboy may read Shakespeare intelligibly with little aid from glossary or notes. Yet Dr. E. A. Abbott gave us five hundred pages of his *Shakespeare Grammar*, and a student who must pass an examination on it will tell you that it contains much to learn.

We need no written record to tell us that these changes were made by those who spoke the language in their adaptation of it to their daily needs. It is a safe guess that most of them were made over the protests of the grammarians, since there have been any, because the grammarians represent professionally the conservative party whose function it is to test changes as they come up, to prolong their period of probation, to make us think twice before we adopt them. Protests against the so-called split infinitive now seem vain; those of us who were taught to shudder at it in our youth still shun it, but all others use

The Case against Grammar.

it freely. The distinction between *like* and *as* seems to be breaking down, and that between *shall* and *will* bids fair to follow, in spite of the fact that angels could do no more than grammarians have done and are doing to preserve them. On the other side, we seem to see the protest of the grammarian sustained in cases like those of the "dangling participle" and the expression "those kind," which passed without blame in Addison's time and later. Language is more democratic than politics; it does not seek to deny even to the autocrat his vote and influence. We who use it, whoever or whatever we are, have it in our hands to shape to our ends.

What, then, is the case against grammar? It is largely, in plain truth, one of ignorance. Grammar has a bad name—we need not quarrel now about where it came from—but is that reason enough for hanging it? We say we want a better system of grammar, but most of us do not know how good our system is. We demand that it shall be simple, flexible, logical, adequate; what shall we answer when foreign students tell us how near it already is in these respects to the heart's desire? If we measure our ideals in language by what we already have, the result is on the whole flattering to everything but our knowledge of our riches—we have pretty nearly what we want if only we knew it. We have to appreciable measure the qualities that make language good, we have the power to make it better if we can make ourselves

Pearls and Pepper.

better along with it. We need more widespread knowledge of what grammar actually is—not a knowledge of how former grammarians sought to impose on a living language the inflexible categories of a dead one, but a knowledge of our speech as a living organism. Let grammar as a book of etiquette go till we learn more of the facts; biology does not concern itself with animals as they ought to be till it knows them pretty well as they are. Except for what we might have to unlearn, grammar in this aspect would be no more difficult to present to the mind than biology, physics or chemistry; less so, indeed, for more, if possible, than these sciences is it a matter of daily experience with all of us. With intelligent knowledge of what we have, we should gain intelligent ideals of what we might wish it to be. If we had these, we should not be troubled by any diversity of opinion on the subject, however wide. If we knew it in all its ways, we might still have a case against grammar, but we should also have ideals, and we might with proper grace call it a poor thing if we felt it strongly our own.



Winter Mist.

FROM a magazine with a rather cynical cover, I learned very recently that for pond skating the proper costume is brown homespun with a fur collar on the jacket, whereas for private rinks one wears a gray herringbone suit and taupe-colored alpine. Oh, barren years that I have been a skater, and no one told me of this! And here's another thing. I was patiently trying to acquire a counter turn under the idle gaze of a hockey player who had no better business till the others arrived than to watch my efforts. "What I don't see about that game," he said at last, "is who wins?" It had never occurred to me to ask. He looked bored, and I remembered that the pictures in the magazine showed the wearers of the careful costumes for rink and pond skating as having rather blank eyes that looked illimitably bored. I have hopes of the "rocker" and the "mohawk"; I might acquire a proper costume for skating on a small river if I could learn what it is; but a bored look—why, even hockey does not bore me unless I stop to watch it. I don't wonder that those who play it look bored. Even Alexander, who played a more imaginative game than hockey, was bored—poor fellow, he

Pearls and Pepper.

should have taken up fancy skating in his youth; I never heard of a human being who pretended to a complete conquest of it.

I like pond skating best by moonlight. The hollow among the hills will always have a bit of mist hanging about it, let the sky be as clear as it may. The moonlight which seems so lucid and brilliant as you look up, is all pearl and smoke round the pond and the hills. The shore which is like iron under your heel as you come down to the ice, is as vague when you look at it from the centre of the pond as the memory of a dream. The motion is like flying in a dream; you float free and the world floats under you; your velocity is without effort and without accomplishment, for speed as you may you leave nothing behind and approach nothing. You look upward. The mist is overhead now; you see the moon in a "hollow halo" at the bottom of "an icy crystal cup," and you yourself are in just such another. The mist, palely opalescent, drives past her out of nothing into nowhere. Like yourself she is the centre of a circle of vague limit and vaguer content, where passes a swift ceaseless stream of impression through a faintly luminous halo of consciousness.

If by moonlight the mist plays upon the consciousness like faint, bewitching music, in sunlight it is scarcely less. More often than not when I go for my skating to our cosy little river, a winding mile from the mill-dam to the railroad trestle, the hills are

Winter Mist.

clothed in silver mist which frames them in vignettes with blurred edges like Japanese paintings on white silk. Such color as they have shows soft and dull through the frost-powder with which the air is filled. At the mill-dam the hockey players furiously rage together, but I heed them not, and in a moment am beyond the first bend, where their clamor comes softened on the air like that of a distant convention of politic crows. The silver powder has fallen on the ice, just enough to cover earlier tracings and leave me a fresh plate to etch with grapevines and arabesques. The stream winds ahead like an unbroken road, barred across with soft-edged shadows of violet, indigo and lavender. On one side it is bordered with leaning trees, birch, oak, maple, hickory and occasional clumps of hemlock under which the very air seems tinged with green. On the other, rounded masses of scrub oak and birch roll back from the edge of the ice like clouds of reddish smoke. Then I swing round the bend where the stream broadens out into the swamp, and weave my curves round the straw-colored tussocks. Here, new as the snow is, there are earlier tracks than mine. A crow has traced his parallel hieroglyph, alternate foot-prints with long dashes where he trailed his middle toe as he lifted his foot and his spur as he brought it down. Under a low shrub that has hospitably scattered its seeds is a dainty close-wrought embroidery of tiny bird feet in irregular curves woven into a

Pearls and Pepper.

circular pattern. A silent glide toward the bank, where among bare twigs little forms flit and swing with low conversational notes, brings me in company with a working crew of pine siskins, methodically rifling seed cones of birch and alder, and chatting *sotto voce* the while. Under a leaning hemlock the writing on the snow tells of a squirrel that dropped from the lowest branch, hopped aimlessly about for a few yards, then went up the bank. Farther on where the river narrows, a flitter-headed rabbit crossing at top speed has made a line seemingly as free from frivolous indirection as if it had been defined by all the ponderosities of mathematics. There is no pursuing track; was it his own shadow he fled, or the shadow of a hawk?

The mist now lies along the base of the hills, leaving the upper ridges almost imperceptibly veiled, and the rounded tops faintly softened. The snowy slopes are etched with brush and trees so fine and soft that they remind me of Dürer's engravings, the fur of St. Gerome's lion, the cock's feathers in the coat of arms with the skull. From behind the veil of the southernmost hill comes a faint note as

"From undiscoverable lips that blow
An immaterial horn."

It is the first far premonition of the noon train; I pause and watch long for the next sign. At last I hear its throbbing, which ceases as it stops at the flag

Winter Mist.

station under the hill. There the invisible locomotive shoots a column of silver vapor above the surface of the mist, breaking in rounded clouds at the top, looking like nothing so much as a photograph of the explosion of a submarine mine, a titanic outburst of force in static pose, a geyser of atomized water standing like a frosted elm tree. Then quick puffs of dusky smoke, the volley of which does not come to my ear till the train has stuck its black head out of fairyland and turned into a prosaic reminder of dinner. High on its narrow trestle it leaps across my little river and disappears between the sandbanks. Far behind it the mist is again spreading into its even layers. Silence is renewed, and I can hear the musical creaking of four starlings in an apple tree as they eviscerate a few rotten apples on the upper branches. I turn and spin down the curves and reaches of the river without stopping for embroideries or arabesques.

At the mill-dam the hockey game still rages; the players take no heed of the noon train.

“Let Zal and Rustum bluster as they will,
Or Hatim call to supper . . .”

Their minds and eyes are intent on a battered disk of hard rubber. I begin to think I have misjudged them when I consider what effort of imagination must be involved in the concentration of the faculties on such an object, transcending the call of hunger

Pearls and Pepper.

and the lure of beauty. Is it to them as is to the mystic the "great syllable Om" by which he attains Nirvana? I cannot attain it; I can but wonder what the hockey players win one half so precious as the stuff they miss.



William De Morgan.

ORDINARILY the young novelist begins his work as the art of the novel itself begins, with tales and sketches, photographic in effect, without the composition of the finished picture. His mind is filled with impressions of life, scenes, characters, faces, bits of action, fragments of dialogue—an endless procession flickering across his screen of consciousness. These he feels with impelling force as material for art. With an instinct like that of a child for dramatic imitation, he registers these impressions, at first almost wholly without significance, or, seemingly as an after-thought, giving them what significance he can. With the maturity that comes with years, comes also the sense of their meaning, the sense which gives power to organize them into coherent wholes. So the art of the modern novel begins with the flow of London life through the pages of *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*. So the art of Thackeray begins with sketches and generalized narratives of type characters; that of Dickens with *Sketches by Boz* and *Pickwick*; George Eliot with *Scenes from Clerical Life*; and so through the list. But too often it is the case that with the growth of the power of organization, which is in

Pearls and Pepper.

large part the intellectual sense of form, the strength of imagination fades. The novelist's task is to express the meaning of life in terms of life itself, but unless he keeps his imagination young, he may find that by the time life has meaning for him, he has let slip the terms for its expression.

To De Morgan's eye, the stream of life never lost its brilliance of color, its vivacity, its freshness of interest. As if he were twenty-one, scenes, impressions, characters, bits of action, crowd his mind and clamor for expression. At times they tax the power of his maturity to organize them; he turns in his own person to the reader to apologize for their jostling demand for attention, tags them with labels of explanation showing what he conceives to be their significance, their relation to the main current. Often these tags seem to take us into his working mind; we see him adjusting the subsequent pattern to the material that thrusts itself into the weaving; a figure that he throws in at first for hardly more than good measure has an effect on the design that at the moment he does not foresee. We do not need Mrs. De Morgan's note on his way of working to tell us that he created his characters first, and arrived at his plot by waiting to see what they would do next. Sometimes the reader waits with him, usually without impatience, for he finds himself in good company; life continues to pass in review even if the plot pauses. It is pleasant to sit for an hour in the bow window of the club with a

William De Morgan.

shrewd observer and a seasoned and genial commentator. It is an ideal club window where there is no danger of acrid gossip nor of platitudes of proverbial philosophy; for our commentator bears a young head on old shoulders.

Such is the fact that turns the easy comparison of De Morgan with Dickens into a contrast. The two figures must come together in the mind, because De Morgan will have it so. He gives us constant reminders of Dickens in matter, method, mannerism, in character, scene, turn of colloquial speech, unfolding of plot—instances would make a long list, ending with the two unfinished stories of mysterious disappearance—and if for a moment we miss any of these, De Morgan reminds us again by direct quotation or reference. But all these are surface glints that deceive us as to the nature of the material only so long as we keep at a distance. Little Dave Wardle's name, for example, may remind us incongruously of Dingley Dell, but Dave himself, and Joey Vance, and Alice-for-Short, and Lizarann, only remind us that Dickens never was a child, that however few of days he may once have been, he was always full of trouble. There are no children in his novels, only wistful little figures such as he once was, yearning for childhood but not experiencing it. Of boys Dickens shows us two kinds, the Artful Dodgers who commit the sins of the world, and the Oliver Twists who bear the burden thereof; it never occurs to him that these are

Pearls and Pepper.

two sides of the same boy. De Morgan knows the ways of the world, but they do not burden his spirit nor darken his mind nor shadow his heart. He runs to no extremes; he is pure without being Puritan; his art is unspoiled either by incessant consciousness of evil and responsibility for it, or pretended unconsciousness and elaborate irresponsibility. He saw many of the things Dickens saw, but he saw them from a totally different point of view. Dickens had most of his experience early in life; it was hard and disillusioning, and he drew on it before it lost its acid. De Morgan's came to him in more even flow, and he ripened it well before he tapped it. He has no grudge to work off, no scores to settle. He can look upon wealth, title, lineage without rancor, upon pride and oppression without scorn. His novels reveal a personality ripe with sunny tolerance, a genial companion for a chat between chapters.

"The detestable Early-Victorian practice of gossiping with one's reader," so De Morgan describes the manner while blandly adding its weight to the heavy charge of Early Victorianism which he says is already at his door. The reviewers who laid it there, most of them born since the Jubilee year, and knowing little of Victorianism save what they may have read in their Chesterton, could hardly command the respectful attention of a man who had experienced all of it except its, and his, unconscious infancy. Victorianism in the original is much like a good many

William De Morgan.

other poisons: it is in no way noxious till it is extracted and boiled down; almost anything will poison you if you take it in a high enough concentration. When Arnold Bennett sets out to be Victorian, the result is a piece of synthetic reconstruction; it is like George Arliss playing Disraeli: every effect is carefully considered, and the result is all that it should be, but it is a picture framed always in the proscenium and footlights. You comment on it in terms of its component parts, dialogue, acting, costume, scenery. De Morgan's Victorianism is not a synthetic product, neither is it a contemporary record like Trollope's; rather it is Victorianism recollected in tranquillity. He does not exhibit it like a museum piece, but wears it as an accustomed garment, though kindly alive to our interest in it. *When Ghost Meets Ghost* prolongs for us throughout its pages the moment when in looking at a daguerreotype you see youth and life in the eyes, in the light of which the costume fades into the insignificant vesture of a human being, and your grandfather becomes the boy you once were, or your grandmother a child like your own daughter. Lossie Thorpe, herself in crinolines, quotes her sister Violet on the earlier generation:

"She says it really cannot matter now what girls did who had their waists under their chins and no crinolines, and ringlets, nor men whose trousers were as tight as stockings, and who had little tail coats and

Pearls and Pepper.

frills to their shirts, and shaved close every morning. You should see *her* crinolines—every new one larger than the last.”

Substitute the terms of the costume Lossie herself was wearing at the time, and the passage expresses our own feeling about twentieth century excursions into Victorianism. But with De Morgan we are not making an excursion, a round trip at sixty miles an hour on a cut-rate ticket. We cannot see his land at all unless we enter in and dwell with him in leisure and quiet, walk his ways with him afoot with no nervous impatience of long sittings in the sun, with good will to enjoy the place we are in unspoiled with desire to be in some other. In this spirit we may meet his friends with no barrier of costume between us. We are not inclined to say of them, “after all, they are human in spite of the hideous things they wear,” for the costumes are not the staple of his art; they are there, and subconsciously keep you aware of the period merely as in good weather unobtrusive signs you could hardly name keep you aware of the season of the year. Here is no parade of the “Victorian compromise,” but whatever was of the period in thought, manners, morals, is in these pages also, less apt to make us wonder that our grandfathers knew so little, than to make us aware how little we know more than they.

To say that the central strength of De Morgan’s

William De Morgan.

work lies in human character means that his characters are human, not types, not specimens, not variants and "sports" in the biologic sense. Unless they were well-rounded human beings he did not entrust them with speaking parts. The type character, named for the one quality it is supposed to exhibit, he recognizes as a cardboard figure fit for nothing but to slide across the stage in a groove. The economy of material that saws character into strips for veneering is not a part of his practice. Type names occur in his pages—Lady Horse, Mrs. Diamonds, Miss Values, Mr. Treatment, Lord Pouralot—for some merely passing mention. Burlesque names he has too, that tickle the ear as lightly as any in the *Bab Ballads*, but he does not limit the scope of his figures with them as Dickens does; they occur chiefly as nicknames from the ready tongue of Christopher Vance, or in the perversions of children's speech. He will chuckle with us over our foibles; he will follow humors so long as they are humorous; but he does not show us crippled souls limping through distorted lives as matter for mirth. Rather he shows us people whom we think of first as very much like ourselves, living such lives as we know, and if before long we begin to find them lovable on the whole, and if the feeling that kindles for them and him warms ourselves who are in their image, it does us no harm. In an age when fiction must move at airplane speed or we will have none of it, when stories are reduced to storiettes and brevity

Pearls and Pepper.

is become the sole aim, De Morgan draws us by the sheer persuasion of his personality to live with people as commonplace as ourselves through chapters of everyday doings till we know them as well as we know our families and neighbors. After that we are interested in trivial things they do which would not catch our eyes if anyone else did them, and when they begin to do the real things of the tale, De Morgan has our interest doubly secure. He repeatedly disclaims any assurance of it, often advises us to "skip," but we do not do it. He carefully explains the plausibility of sundry bits of action—then if ever we are inclined to skip, for why try to assure us that a mortal might have done thus and so under such and such circumstances when we have just seen with our own eyes a mortal do that very thing? In *Alice-for-Short* the ghosts are seen by very practical people who do not believe in ghosts. You know them very well; you know that they did see the ghosts, for you were there when it happened. Charles Heath has not imagination enough to be a good artist (to be sure he writes fiction, but it must be poor stuff from what we hear of it); he couldn't imagine a ghost that wasn't there if he wanted to, much less against his will. Thus you find yourself leagued with the author to convince a sceptical character. Again, like Richardson but with more discretion, De Morgan gains credence by building in the reader's mind an impression like a barrier reef, atom by atom till

William De Morgan.

at last it is solid enough to wreck a battleship. It is not an easy method to use to-day; we have had training in novel-reading since Richardson's time; we are quite ready to accept lath and canvas and are impatient of his too careful building. Neither Richardson nor Trollope ever created a more tiresome character than Mrs. Eldridge in *It Never Can Happen Again*, but if you attend patiently all her dreary interviews with her victim you will never challenge the result on grounds of plausibility, nor will you soon forget her. For better reasons we shall not forget Christopher Vance, nor any of the group of children who take their being from so obvious a sympathy on De Morgan's part. Old people are there, too, because he loves them, and we can do no less—Mrs. Verrinder, and the old twin sisters Phoebe and Maisie, souls riding tranquilly on the ground swell of storms long past, tragedy from which time has filtered the bitterness. It is autumn tragedy with pale colors and wan sunshine; twilight tragedy with the sunset smoldering through the ashes of the mist; on the whole a rather "cheerful Thanatopsis." For age it is better so, but where the tragedy is that of youth it is too carefully filtered; in removing the last taint of bitterness De Morgan has taken out the poignance too. We miss the "bright, troubled period" of youth. Charles Heath in the hands of the adventuress and failing in his art is no such picture as Pendennis fallen at the feet of the Fotheringay or plucked for

Pearls and Pepper.

his degree. The heroines are fine figures of abundant vitality and beauty, but we scarcely see below the surface of their emotional life, and when one of them, Lucy Mauleverer, is cast for a part that is woven of tragedy, we feel as if we were kept outside the real story, peering at it through a pane of glass which baffles us with reflections of outward things. Nancy Fraser, in spite of too much stage business with the bicycle, is perhaps the most real of them, though she is not the heroine of her drama. Lossie Thorpe, Gwendolen Rivers and their kind are human enough to be satisfying; you feel sure that they must have faults though you might be unable to name one; they are successfully made for love, but not for worship. There are secondary figures with memorable individuality. There are dogs who do not make themselves too conspicuous, but they are faithful in the minds of those of us who love their kind—a lesser artist if he could have drawn them at all would have peopled whole books with them. De Morgan's gallery of characters is not large and it is not crowded, but it shows us figures that were not born for death.

Of an author whose first creative act is character we do not expect much in the way of plot; characters as real as De Morgan's are not easily shaped to organized structure of action. De Morgan tries to do his duty by his plots, and succeeds as often as not. *Joseph Vance* has all the organization one could ask of the novel in autobiographic form, and the

William De Morgan.

device of the blameless hero atoning in tragic silence a sin not his own here comes off with more success than it deserves, for it is lightly touched and is not the mainstay of the plot. For a comment on *It Never Can Happen Again* one may paraphrase Dr. Johnson on Richardson: Sir, if you were to read it for the story, your impatience would be so much fretted that you would hang yourself. You must read it for Lizarann and Jim, who have unsatisfactorily few points of contact with the affair that never can happen again. *An Affair of Dishonor* is the exception, the *Henry Esmond*, of De Morgan's list, for it takes its rise as it were in the mind of Stevenson himself, scene calling for incidents; the morning ride to the duel is a companion picture to the inn at Burford and the horseman who rattles at its green shutters with the handle of his whip. Character takes shape, to be sure, as the story goes on, but it takes the shape of the plot, and does not outgrow its bounds. When De Morgan calls on the supernatural to take us beyond the commonplace, he does not try to thrill us, he ostentatiously disconnects every wire that could give us a shock; then he handles it safely so long as he keeps to the established canon of the supernatural, the body of known lore that we may embroider with circumstance, but may not alter. *Alice-for-Short* is as orthodox as *Hamlet*; a disputed inheritance is as regular a piece of business for a ghost as for a lawyer. A ghost is on a legitimate

Pearls and Pepper.

errand when it comes to reveal circumstances of death or the hiding-place of the body, but no acceptable ghost will lie about either as does the apparition of Dr. Cartaret when it gives his sister-in-law to understand that he was murdered. Nor will it, if it condescends to interfere in a love affair, deal with an intermediary, as Dr. Cartaret's ghost does with Charles Snaith. But little Lizarann's last call of "Pi-lot!" is quite within the canon; we accept it instantly and it has its effect. De Morgan's ghosts are very much like his other characters: so long as he lets them alone and watches to see what they will do next, they serve him well, but if he tries to contrive for them, they play him tricks.

Of De Morgan's style one is hardly conscious, and it is never conscious of itself. In this it is the best of style, as it is in the sense that it bears strongly the personal impress; it is never remarkable, but no one else could have written it. So seldom is there anything of formality that it is rarely one feels any sense of form, but it is there in the closeness with which the word clothes the thought and moves with it in freedom. De Morgan is never any more at a loss for a word than a terrier is for a place to go through a hedge. He has a sense for the value of words like an artist's for color, and a fancy, like that of a child to whom all words are new, for turning up a familiar word as if it were new-minted and showing us a pattern on a surface to our senses rubbed smooth by

William De Morgan.

use. Scrupulous sincerity, no less than humor, keeps him off formality; he says of Peggy Heath: "She felt that she had rather been making a speech and wasn't sure she wasn't a humbug. Perhaps we all feel like that when we say anything consecutive." Sincerity and freshness of imagination—in style as in the other elements of his art we come back always on the qualities of the man. The years took no toll of him, but gave him their gifts. To keep one's ideals after the loss of the illusions, to keep one's imagination pacing evenly with the growth of the mind, to see life in long perspective, not in the vertical, shadowless brilliance of noon, but in the level, revealing rays of declining day in the last decade of a life as long as De Morgan's, this is to "die beloved and young" and at the same time "blest and wise."



My Neighbor and Myself.

No doubt it was an oversight on my part to buy the house at all without consulting the neighbors. My only excuse is that at the time I thought of them only as *the* neighbors, and not yet *my* neighbors. I took what I conceived to be the ordinary precautions; I went over the house with a builder whom I trusted, and I paid for an elaborate bit of research known as abstract of title. It never occurred to me to make a house-to-house canvass of the neighbors to learn what they were holding out on me.

The first to unmask was Mr. Odgers, next door to the south, who paused to watch me uncrate the dining table at the precise moment when I discovered the nail driven through the crate into the edge of my priceless ancestral mahogany. He did his best, but the scar remains to this day unhealed by any words of his. He hinted in unmeasured terms that you never could trust anybody to crate your furniture, and that anybody might have known that the only safe way was to do it all yourself. Then he asked me what I was going to do about the cellar.

I said I had hardly known it long enough to feel justified in outlining a policy, and was about to ask

My Neighbor and Myself.

him whether he would recommend the Montessori Method or the Swedish System when he went on to say that there was a perennial spring of water in that cellar, and that no plan had ever been devised to drain it thereof. It "stood to reason," he said, that it should be so, and demonstrated it by his own private mixture of misinformation, one part distorted from a professor of geology (deceased) to two parts exuded by a witch-hazel practitioner who was said to have detected and traced the underground stream. When I succeeded in interpolating the plea that the cellar was at the moment as dry as the attic, Mr. Odgers imperturbably called my attention to the fact that it was an extra-dry season; that springs were drying this year that had never dried before. Anyway, the water from the sidewalk would always flow into the cold-air box of the furnace. You see, the wind always comes through between the Town Hall and the Baptist Church, and drifts the snow here on the sidewalk deeper than any place else in the village; then when it melts it flows straight into that cold-air box. Stands to reason it can't go any place else.

He then devoted a further hour of his precious time to the exposition—I couldn't invite him to dinner, for the dining table still waited on the porch. It was graphic; I could picture the rush of water into the furnace, its spouting up the registers! He had, he said, lived there (man and boy) for forty years;

Pearls and Pepper.

tenants had come and tenants had gone in the house I had bought, but not one had been able to divert that flow from its undeviating course into the cold-air box. And the year of the big blizzard it not only flowed in, but it froze there. (Before my mind's eye the geysers from the registers petrified into crystal columns.) And "they said" we were to have another blizzard next winter. Ever notice how them things come round every so often? Well, then, we're about due for another one, ain't we? Now his cellar was always dry as a bone; funny thing, too, right next door to mine.

That evening Mrs. Pardoe came in to find out whether we had had anything done to the kitchen chimney. My wife asked, anxiously, what was the matter with it. Mrs. Pardoe said that somehow it never did work just right. Mrs. Tiptod, who used to live here five years ago, tried everything, but she never could get her oven to heat. They even had it tore out right under the roof there, and built in different, but it wa'n't no use. The last folks that lived here, they didn't bother much about it; they always cooked with the gas, but that way your kitchen was always cold in the winter. Mr. Pardoe he always said he s'posed they didn't dare build a real good fire in that stove now, considerin' the kind of a job they did rebuildin' the chimney; it was that loose-jointed up there under the roof it was liable to set the house afire any minute. But, anyway, it never had, and

My Neighbor and Myself.

maybe he didn't know so much about it as he thought he did; but he ought to, due to him spendin' so much time up there with the bricklayers, one of 'em bein' a kind of second cousin of his, as he happened to find out after he come there on the job. After Mrs. Pardoe had gone it took me a long time to convince my wife that the builder and I had made a thorough examination of the kitchen chimney just underneath the roof.

I was out when Mrs. Lovegrove called, and I think the circumstance saved her life, and me from a murderer's fate. She wandered all over the house and found fault with all our arrangements. Mrs. Tiptod always had the piano there. Mrs. Tiptod had a *round* dining table, and had the sideboard in the bay window. Mrs. Tiptod kept the coffee grinder on the shelf behind the stove. You can't sleep with the bed that way; you have to have the head to the north. Mrs. Tiptod had it here, and she never had the window open like that. What *have* you done to this room? Mrs. Tiptod had a blue flowered paper here, and it was always the *best* room. Why do you have so many books? Mrs. Tiptod had one little bookcase with glass in the front; it stood right here, and she never had books all round like this. Why don't you have one of them Madonna pictures over the mantel? Mrs. Tiptod always did, and she had the loveliest fruit piece in the dining room. I don't suppose I shall ever get a shot at Mrs. Tiptod (she has gone out into

Pearls and Pepper.

the *Ewigkeit*, or to Fort Dodge, or words to that effect), but Mrs. Lovegrove lives just across the street; there are many kilos of her; I doubt if I could miss her.

It was Mr. McHeff who tried to wish a neighborhood feud on us. He asked me whether I intended to use the path between his house and the Eels's. I said I hadn't used it much; I usually went out by the street. Why? Well, he didn't s'pose old man Eels would mind much if *I* used it. The trouble was when Ruel Alefounder bought the place and then refused to buy the right of way in from Eels's lane and called Alf Eels a robber for the price he was askin' for it. There was a time then when it was much as your life was worth for anyone who lived in this house to go through there. Mrs. Tiptod didn't make things much better, neither. She told Alf Eels to his face he was a dirty old skinflint, an' she had words with Mis' Eels whenever she went by, till you'd thought there was a cat fight every day in the week an' twice on Sunday. Still, he didn't think that if I was careful not to rub old man Eels the wrong way I sh'd have *much* trouble. But you never could tell; he's such a pernicketty old cuss.

My duty to an unkempt quarter section that lay between my sidewalk and the road was expounded to me by Uncle Ed Leddy, he of the squirrel tooth. I was to plow it and seed it, and then "lawnmower" it, I and my heirs and assigns forever. In vain I

My Neighbor and Myself.

pointed out to him that if I kept the acre of ground within my own legally defined boundaries reasonably massaged and barbered, it was all I could undertake, and, I feared, a bit more. In vain I urged that my share of the town taxes would more than cover the improvement if the town wished it done. In vain I urged that no one else in the village had such a burden laid at his door. Uncle Ed was inexorable. The town expected it of me, and I should incur his (Uncle Ed's) severe displeasure if I neglected this civic opportunity.

I have lived in the house now long enough to have seen the revolving year more than once round its dial. There has never been any more water in my cellar than the water company allows me. Except for a casual squirrel now and then, I have had nothing in my cold-air box but cold air. My kitchen chimney stands as a monument to the bricklayers of the former age. The neighbors will have their little initiation stunts, but don't risk any money on what they say. Not but what a fellow ought to know what he's getting into. There's that chap that is buying the Pardoe place, for instance. I really think somebody ought to tell him how rotten the sills are on account of old Pardoe banking up the underpinning in the winter and leaving it year in and year out—maybe I ought to tell him myself.



The Most Contemplative Man's Recreation.

DOUBTLESS the contemplative man's recreation was a great discovery in Izaak Walton's day. Killing a fish or two must have been a real relaxation after such nervous work as chopping off a king's head and fighting battles like Naseby and Worcester. Or was it the other way round? A man killed his dozen or so of fish before breakfast, said "Fie upon this quiet life; I want work," and set out on the trail of the King or the Roundheads. Whichever way it was, our extremes to-day lie farther apart. We have bagged a brace of emperors—we lost count of the kings long ago—and alongside Verdun, Naseby and Worcester look like cosy little nursery squabbles. Therefore our search for tranquillity must go beyond fishing. The time is ripe to maintain in the face of Izaak and all his disciples that the pursuit of the harmless necessary mushroom, specifically, the untamed *Agaricus Campestris*, has more recreation for the most contemplative man than any angling that was ever invented.

First be it granted that recreation is regeneration, "spiritual new birth," a time of re-charging the bat-

The Most Contemplative Man's Recreation.

teries exhausted by steady drain and repeated shock. This at once puts fly-fishing out of the question, for a contemplative man can no more re-charge his batteries during a fight than can a submarine. When he has stretched his nerves in the pursuit of dollars, ideals or ideas, can he relax them in the pursuit of salmon, trout or tarpon? Something, indeed, might be said for perch-fishing from a flat-bottomed boat, hung on an invisible surface over the brown-green depth of a shady cove, or under the shade of the bucolic hat on the open pond. You amputate the legs of a superannuated chair, and screw its upper works to the stern thwart. You load your pipe for a long smoke more carefully than you bait your hook. If you are fortunate in having no fisherman's luck, you may learn to calculate the orbit of the kingfisher, or guess why the lucky-bugs so furiously rage together.

But the more you catch the less you are re-created. A perch on the hook under normal conditions is a very slight interruption to the contemplative process, but if it comes at a critical time it may be just enough to lose you the glowing thought the tail of which you were about to grasp; the thought that would have overcome the last argument of the customer who failed you last week—or would have been just the thing for the gambit of that sermon on "Open Plumbing in Literature," or the scenario of "The Parrot That Talked in Its Sleep." If your perch turns out to be a hornpout, so much the worse. If the hook

Pearls and Pepper.

engages your finger or your overalls, if any minor mishap calls forth an expletive, then your battery is discharging; you might as well be back in the office. Similar is the effect if your contemplative process turns to the framing of sentences which you hope may convince others that you care less for fish than for the pipe smoked in peace, the kingfisher, the lucky-bugs, the glowing thought.

The mushroom may at times be shy, but it is not game. Of all vegetable creatures it succumbs with the least struggle. You must wear plate armor to catch the blackberry. You must call (or imitate) a terrier when you have run the potato to earth. Your grapevine may revert to the arboreal, take to the woods and run up a tree. But the gentle *Agaricus* remains in the open, and has no speed save in growth. It has only one mode of defense, which is to shelter itself behind the reputation of its cousin *Amanita*, or the loathly name of toadstool, which it may bear with honesty if without honor. This simple *ruse de guerre* may serve to terrorize those who never pursue mushrooms save in the open market or round the edge of the steak in the platter, but from the most contemplative man's batteries it draws not one volt or one ampere (or whatever the modern equivalents of jot and tittle may be). Nor, indeed, does anything else connected with the pursuit. In fishing, whatever comes to your hook, be it rockweed or rock bass, sends a thrill up your line that draws an answering thrill

The Most Contemplative Man's Recreation.

from your nerves. In the mushroom pasture, the sight of your prey comes with a soft glow of pleasure like that of a happy thought that is instantly at home in the mind. You are not obliged to swallow your susceptibilities for the grasping of a slimy struggling thing, the tearing of the hook from its vitals and the inserting of it in the vitals of an equally slimy and even more reluctant earthworm. Your game comes easily to your hand, and therewith you sit on a lichened rock where the scent of sweet fern and huckleberry steaming from last night's rain comes refreshingly to your nostrils, and pensively you remove the earthy taint from the plump convexities.

By the time you have learned to know the creature when you see it, you have learned that excuses for empty hands are works of supererogation. Set out with basket or pail, or even so much as an avowed purpose, and you are lost. One such experience is enough. The next time, you slip a folded paper bag in your pocket.

"Where you going, Henry?" This from the voice behind the screen door.

"Over yonder." You wave your hand to at least three points of the compass, intimating that you are merely going "walking round your farm." Later, with the bag distended, your pride is to speak casually, rather as if you had found the mushrooms and the bag together.

Pearls and Pepper.

“Look what I found down in the far pasture. Enough for supper, isn’t there?”

If unsuccessful, you mention a glimpse of the woodchuck at the far end of the orchard, or submit an exhaustive report on the present state of the Baldwin apple crop. The paper bag lies hidden in your hip pocket. Thenceforth for the duration of the season it is always with you, for to come upon mushrooms in profusion and to be unable to carry them is as bad as a cigar ten miles from a match. You may use an unhygienic hat, but it will not hold many, and leaves your crown exposed to the derision of the sun all the way home. A handkerchief, even if you have a clean one, is inadequate save for an individual portion. Coat pockets bring your mushrooms home impregnated with bits of tobacco. Trousers pockets reduce them to a moist, unpleasant jelly. You march back to the house. If you do return to the pasture, you find that some other mycophagist, whether with two legs or four, has been there in the interval, and trespassed outrageously. But that is before you learn the true recreation.

The gleam of the rounded surface in the midst of the close-cropped grass reminds you of a golf-ball, and you smile at the Chestertonian fancy that your pursuit is like that part of golf from which it differs most, for it is like hunting a lost ball without annoyance, a paradox most complete! The annoyance of the lost ball consists (even more than in the loss of

The Most Contemplative Man's Recreation.

time from the Game of Great Price) in the feeling that you look like a fool to the others. In mushroom hunting you need never appear to be seeking anything. You drift hither and yon in the pasture; only the chipmunk eyes you from the wall, and he, whatever he knows, never tells. The searching is done with the outer vision, soon becoming a mere reflex, calming rather than disturbing the central activities of the mind. It is as if the eye carried a pattern which it applies automatically and with inconceivable rapidity to every hand's breadth of the pasture, till suddenly the pattern fits; then your feet are drawn, seemingly without volition, to where the little umbrellas are spread or the tiny buttons push up through the earth. Unless you wish, you are not conscious of looking ever downward. You are placidly aware of the cloud chariots and the shapes of the hills; you mark the strife of crow and kingbird, and the poise of the hawk. If a few mushrooms escape, you are none the wiser, and "what you don't know won't hurt you." Besides, you are an amateur; you have made no boast; you have no score to hand in, no competitor—if you have a helper that is not my affair, for the possibilities of mushroom hunting *à deux* are beyond the scope of this discussion.

"He knows all the smells of the grass," said a four-year-old neighbor of my terrier, as the dog coursed imaginary scents on the lawn. So the mushroom hunter knows all the secrets of the herbage of his

Pearls and Pepper.

home pastures: cinquefoil, strawberry leaf, quartz crystal and the runways of the ants. Such things are worth marking, for you find they give joy to the inner eye comparable to that from the larger aspects of nature. This love of the minute beauties is the clear gain of the hunter of mushrooms, an addition to his resources of pleasure that other hunters miss more often than not. By contrast, too, it adds to the glory of the hills when you lift your eyes to them. Rank after rank they fade away into the haze, hanging like faint and fainter veils of purple, violet and lavender, in curve and color like layers of smoke in a still room. The sun slopes to meet its western hill-top, opening through the cloud curtains silvery vistas that carry the eye and the spirit far into the etherial spaces. To them the earth-born *Agaricus* has led you, and beholding them you may experience nearest approach to complete re-creation known to the contemplative—or most contemplative—mind.



The Idiom of Democracy.

"THE slang of the Americans is speech from the heart"; so said an English writer (Mr. Douglas S. Martin) not long ago in an essay on our current idiom. Doubtless he takes it more seriously than do we; or else he assumes that we take nothing seriously; that our hearts are not organs of our being, but appliqué ornaments on the sleeves of our machine-made coats and shirt-waists. But if to him the heart is the seat not so much of the emotions as of imagination, we may go so far with him as to admit that we wear it on our sleeves ready to be applied to all matters of our lives, especially those which we as Americans hold in common, and that the speech which comes from it is the current metaphor of our democracy.

Slang, Gelett Burgess once said, is "the illegitimate sister of Poetry, that makes with her a common cause against the utilitarian economy of prose." Their common ground is the realm of metaphor, as we are quick to recognize, for we like to think of our ready idiom as the stuff that poetry is made of. "Good *night!*" we exclaim to express the finality of a lost cause, and it makes us feel that we are poets,

Pearls and Pepper.

or that Shakespeare was an everyday American, to find it in the same sense in *Henry IV*, Part I,

"If he fall in, good night! or sink or swim."

Chaucer uses "come off" and "go sit down." Shakespeare has "not in it." Sheridan has "cut it out." Molière has "got my goat." The list might be prolonged; and when all examples are put together one begins to doubt whether all new slang is not old poetry writ large. Indeed, slang is poetry in just so far as it seeks the emotions through the freshly edged metaphor. It is the opposite of poetry in that it consciously seeks to be in bad taste. The difference is in the nature of the emotion it seeks to arouse. Its humor is Falstaffian; it speaks to us not in tears, but in fun only. If it is not grotesque—if it is funny merely because it is new—it either perishes or becomes plain English. The slang metaphor, too, as the ephemerid of poetry has a short cycle of life with startling power of self-renewal. It is like evolution afflicted with the speed mania, type succeeding type so fast that one loses the sense of continuity in the process. When a careless collegian of George Ade's says, "Father, you talk like a hod of ashes," the figure is not hard to recognize; it is at least true to type. But when Wallace Irwin's inebriate calls on someone to

"corral the jim-jam bugs that madly race
Around the eaves that from my forehead jut,"

The Idiom of Democracy.

one must think twice to determine just what metaphors he has so wildly and perilously extended into the grotesque. A new phrase has a razor edge which is soon broken by the rough handling to which it is inevitably subjected; it must be re-edged by extension of the figure. "Hot air" thus becomes "south wind" or "baked wind"; "gas" becomes "balloon juice"; the milder image of the "easy mark" is expanded to

"Any centenarian can see
To ring a bull's eye when he shoots at me."

"Go up in the air" becomes "hit the ceiling"; "peach" becomes "nectarine" and then "peacherino." A few years ago we reminded the egotist that he was "not the only pebble on the beach"; next came "the only oyster in the stew," and even "the only lion after Daniel." "Thirty cents" developed into "six plugged nickels." "You're not so warm," ran through many rapid changes, among others, "There are cripples livelier than you." A recent collector exhibited some fifteen variants of the "You tell 'em, old tooth, you've got the nerve" species. Slang expressions are like the proverbial mule in that they have no pride of ancestry (albeit they sometimes come of kingly stock), but the comparison goes no further, for they have unbounded hope of posterity. Beside such shooting-stars of language the legitimate metaphor of

Pearls and Pepper.

poetry shines like a planet; it fades only to return, and the memory holds it dear.

If we grant slang its metaphor, and assume, as we safely may, its democracy, we have advanced by two axioms toward the problem of it; that there is a problem few who have to do with slang either as producers or consumers will be disposed to deny. If we put these axioms in relation with two propositions which seem mutually exclusive, there may be generated light that will enable us to see the problem steadily and see it whole. This hope we may have, too, with no fear of ever reaching the deadly finality of an answer. The two propositions are: first, slang is a principle of decay in language; second, slang is a principle of growth in language.

About the first, any schoolma'am can tell us. When Johnny in the "English" class declares that "Claudio gave Hero an awful bawling out in the church when they went to get married," she will, unless she knows more than most of her kind about Shakespeare's own use of slang, expatiate on the decay of the language (due to slang) since the poet fixed its standard of purity. She will show that slang indicates lack on the user's part of both vocabulary and ideas, and that if Johnny persists in using it, he will have neither, and that if all the Johnnies use it, both will disappear from the face of the earth. Very likely she looks to some authority who says, "Slang is the great corrupting matter; it is perishable itself, and corrupts what

The Idiom of Democracy.

is round it." She draws the obvious inference, and deals with such slang as comes under her jurisdiction as if anyone using it or countenancing it were in a conspiracy against the bone and sinew of the language. But Johnny thinks he knows a bit about slang himself. "Oh, piffle!" he mutters under his breath; he would say it aloud if he could quote the words of the sage who says, "Slang may be called almost the only living language." Johnny is less articulate; he only "has a hunch" that slang is always to be encouraged because it is the language of the future, and that anyone who tries to suppress it is "standing right in front of the band-wagon."

Most of us agree with both Johnny and the teacher and are not troubled by the paradox, for it lies at the very heart of our democracy, and we believe that that heart beats true. We look on with "keen untroubled face" (our own idiom phrases it less academically) while Mr. Kipling points out to his puzzled countrymen the paradoxes of our democracy. We are "hedged with alien speech" he tells them, and "flout the law we make," never ceasing the while to "make the law we flout." Of our language we may fairly imagine Englishmen thinking, as one of them is said to have spoken, of the city of New York—"It will be wonderful when it is finished." We in our turn look to the other side of the Atlantic and think we notice that most things that are finished are dead. With our own poet (Mrs. Piatt) we see "a waste of

Pearls and Pepper.

grave-dust, stamped with crown and crest," and we are content to be still growing. Whatever the inconveniences of our paradoxes and crudities in language, and there are many, they are not morbid symptoms.

Order and uniformity in language are desirable qualities; we should and do seek them ever. We may have them when we are willing to pay the price, but the price is one which Americans are unwilling to pay. Its name is aristocracy. We believe in the principle of civilian control. If we were willing to hand over our language to some imperial council or royal academy we might have in it the same system and efficiency that, for example, the Germans have, which is all that is humanly possible, a fixed standard of correctness, follow it who may. But we Americans are apt to resent even the implication of aristocracy inherent in some of the objections often raised to our free and easy way of handling English. "The King's English" our critics sometimes call it, as if the king were defender of the language no less than of the faith; as if it were a possession of his which he had graciously lent his people for their use, not abuse. They in turn imply proprietary rights in it when they express anxiety for its fate in our irreverent hands. And even among ourselves there is a small group that seems at times to claim special privilege. Professors, school-teachers, pedants, and many arbiters of taste, may now and then be caught in the act of commenting on language as if they owned it. Every

The Idiom of Democracy.

man, be he king, peasant or emperor, owns just so much of the language as he wields power over. The monarch may have his "nick on the cavalry horses" and his "mark on the medical stores," but over language he has little more power than have other men; scarcely more than Canute had over the waves. Through his eminence, he may, as may any conspicuous man, influence it by way of fashion; if the change prove permanent, he has added a grain to the sands of the shore. But the more one observes of the ways of language, the more one is inclined to believe that neither demagogue, pedagogue, king, critic, nor any law but its own, has any measurable effect on it. Man-made laws affect it very much as engineering works affect the Mississippi River. If the engineers creep up when the river isn't looking and put in a sincere piece of work that harmonizes with natural forces, it may last for a time. Such work is very much like trying to "change a law of Nature by Act of Congress," and so is any decree in regard to language. A law may affect the written language so as to make it conform either more closely or less closely to the spoken language. If the change indicated by the law is away from the spoken language, the law is likely soon to show its absurdity. Laws may determine for a time which language a folk shall speak, but they cannot affect the structure of larynx and vocal cords, or change ways of thought, and these are to language what climate and land contours are

Pearls and Pepper.

to a river. Laws come and go, but language goes on forever.

How then are we to have order and unity in language, if democracy means anarchy, and aristocracy (if it be possible) means dry-rot? What, in a word, should be our attitude toward this unruly element called slang? The question has been answered (by Professor G. L. Kittredge) in such a way as to raise another: "The prejudice against this form of speech is to be encouraged, though it usually rests on a misconception." As evil communication, slang may corrupt good manners, the speech, that is, of the individual, and it is as a corruptor of good manners that the prejudice against it is chiefly to be encouraged. The misconception is probably the idea that it can have any harmful effect on language in general, the language that goes on like life itself, to whom the individual is as nothing. After all, how can slang corrupt this living language? A slang word or expression may do one of three things; it may disappear after a comparatively brief vogue; it may remain for centuries as slang; it may come into good use. Those expressions which disappear have about as much effect on the language as foam does on the ocean. Those which remain as slang neither help nor hinder much except as more or less disreputable auxiliaries. Those which come into good use make for sound growth. A look at the nature of the process may shed

The Idiom of Democracy.

some light on the part we should consciously take in it.

We may imagine slang as "almost the only living language," clamorously offering us new words to be voted into our vocabularies or blackballed at our collective pleasure. The process is prodigally wasteful as those of Nature herself—if "of fifty seeds" Nature "brings but one to bear," language is no less "careful of the type" and "careless of the single life," for of a thousand ephemeral words, but one will hold its place in the permanent language. Those that perish are quite as likely to be killed by their friends who work them to death as by their enemies, the purists, who mercilessly hunt them down. Any expression that survives both treatments is likely to be true metal, and worthy the place it has won in the face of the severest competition. However hard on the individual word, and however wasteful, the process is a good one for the language. Now, if the matter were as simple as voting "yes" or "no" on a single proposition, we could understand it easily enough. A vote might not count more than a grain of sand in a ton, but at least each voter would know that he had contributed one millionth of one per cent to a result, and would know within a lifetime what the result was. But how is it with language? We have a hundred million voters each voting every day and all day, and each voting for a different thing. If we think of a deliberative body of fifty men proceeding under

Pearls and Pepper.

parliamentary rules to some action, each wanting something slightly different from anything wanted by any of the others, we can easily imagine that not one, or at most not more than one, will be satisfied with the action of the whole body. Multiply the number by a million or two and remove all parliamentary rules, and you have a figure that might serve to show the status of the "science" of language. Language is a resultant we cannot hope to calculate, from a composition of forces so intricate we cannot trace it. Not all your prayers will cancel half a line, nor all your tears wash out a word of it. Neither can you by taking thought add a word to its vocabulary, though you may do so easily by a lucky chance. Not all the efforts of the word architects have given us an acceptable pronoun for the third person singular masculine and feminine in one, but the humorist gives us a useful word, *bromide*, which in a year or two from its first appearance makes its way into the dictionary, soberly accepted in its new sense. Attempts to modify language deliberately are like eugenics, which is faultless in theory, and works beautifully on guinea-pigs. And here again language is like poetry; it does not flourish if we try to grow it by logic.

Here, then, lies the real problem for those of us who have a conscience in the matter, and it is not unlike the problem of life itself. Is language a matter of blind fate that leaves us neither duty nor power? Most of us prefer to think it is not; that we have

The Idiom of Democracy.

both duty and power in questions of speech, even though neither is clear to see. For our belief that the prejudice against slang should be encouraged, one reason at least may be offered. Two of the forces in the complex from which language emerges are those of opposition and encouragement; these two are a part of the energy which is the vitality of language. It is like some of the processes of nature in this respect, it must be opposed if it is to be healthy growth. Killing new words if you can does not kill language any more than cutting back a grape-vine kills grapes. It is in our power to supply vitality; it is our duty to do so. One duty toward slang is not to be neutral. In so far as we have convictions, feelings, beliefs about it, we should act on them. Another duty is to act as intelligently as possible. It is true that imagination rather than intellect seems to supply the energy that inspires and shapes language, but intelligence is the guiding principle of it in so far as it has any, and ought to be so more than it is. We call on it for guidance whenever we seek to make a conscious choice, whenever we question the present status or probable future of an expression that is or has been slang, asking, Has it come into good use? Is it likely ever to prove of permanent value?

Of the fate of current slang words we may find an index in the fate, wherever it has been determined, of analogous words in the past. The word *automobile* is built to describe a new species, and we promptly

Pearls and Pepper.

shorten it to *auto*. Somewhat more than a hundred years ago a new and fashionable vehicle was the *cabriolet*. By 1830 the abbreviated form *cab* was in good use. One might infer that *auto* would be in good use by 1930 were it not for the fact that the vaguer *car* is superseding it. From the past we learn that abbreviations which are at first slangy are likely to survive if they are permanently useful. On September 28, 1710, Steele published in *The Tatler* an unsigned letter written by Swift, who complained of the popular and fashionable corruption of the language. One fault in particular he mentioned:

“which consists in pronouncing the first syllable in a word that has many, and dismissing the rest, such as ‘Phizz,’ ‘Hipps,’ ‘Mobb,’ ‘Pozz,’ ‘Rep,’ and many more, when we are already overloaded with monosyllables, which are the disgrace of our language. Thus we cram one syllable, and cut off the rest, as the owl fattened her mice after she had bit off their legs, to prevent them from running away; and if ours be the same reason for maiming our words, it will certainly answer the end; for I am sure no other nation will desire to borrow them. Some words are hitherto but fairly split, and therefore only in their way to perfection, as *Incog* and *Plenipo*: But in a short time, it is to be hoped, they will be further docked to *Inc* and *Plen*. This reflection has made me of late years very impatient for a peace, which I

The Idiom of Democracy.

believe would save the lives of many brave words, as well as men. The war has introduced abundance of polysyllables which will never be able to live many more campaigns, 'Speculations,' 'Operations,' 'Preliminaries,' 'Ambassadors,' 'Palisadoes,' 'Communication,' 'Battalions,' as numerous as they are, if they attack us too frequently in our Coffee Houses, we shall certainly put them to flight and cut off their rear."

Of the "maimed" words which Swift complains of here, *mob* for *mobile vulgus* is the only one which really survives. *Hyp* for *hypochondria* has given way to the older *grouch*, probably because *grouch* speaks more plainly for itself; *hyp* might stand for any one of a hundred words derived from or built upon the Greek. Similar causes might account for the fate of *pos* and *phiz*, which, if they have not actually passed out of the language are mere ghosts of archaisms. *Reputation* is *rep* nowadays only in a few slang phrases (*demi-rep*, "go get a rep"), but the abbreviation is not widely accepted because the word is not so widely used as to prove a stumbling block; most persons who use it at all are willing to use the whole of it. An expression that is used to-day in newspaper diplomacy, *chargé d'affaires*, is shortened and Anglicized to *charge*, and used as if it were a title. But we retain *mob* because it means only one thing, and that thing we have always with us. By analogy we might

Pearls and Pepper.

augur a successful career for *auto* and *phone*, were it not for the fact that *photo* has been knocking at the gate for fifty years with lessening chances of admission, and that *gent* and *pants* have been on the waiting list even longer. Of American speakers of English, perhaps nine tenths know no other word than *pants* for the garment it names; still this all but unanimous vote for it does not make it acceptable to the necessary "majority of the best writers and speakers," for it still has the taint of vulgarity, whereas other words to the same effect have not. College slang is full of abbreviations which seem useful to the users; *prof* for *professor*, *ex* for *examination*, *dorm* for *dormitory*, *track* for *track athletics*, *polecon* for *political economy*, *phil* for *philosophy*, and a hundred others. If these do not become widely current outside college circles, it is probably because the public knows little of the things they name. War, too, contributes monosyllables, as Swift suggests in his letter to *The Tatler*, but it is not as a rule the coffee-house strategist who makes them out of polysyllables, but rather the soldier in the trenches who makes them out of the whole cloth. While he strafes the Boche and the zepp, we read and talk of salients and offensives, hydro-aeroplanes and merchant submarines, superdreadnaughts and torpedo boat destroyers. If these were to last long enough in our everyday vocabulary to lose the gloss of technicality, we might reduce them to lower terms, even as the

The Idiom of Democracy.

Bostonian, supposedly sesquipedalian of speech, has reduced "a pedestrian who crosses the street in disregard of traffic regulations" to the compact "jay-walker."

Slang metaphors may survive when they are expressive and not far-fetched or obscure, providing—and this applies as well to all categories of slang—that the innate vulgarity of the word is not so strong that we cannot forget it. In some cases the vulgarity is so slight that we cannot remember it, and wonder why the word should ever have been acceptable as slang. *Hit*, for example, as meaning *success* of one sort or another, is still recorded by conservative lexicographers as a bit of theatrical slang, but to most of us, if we think of the metaphor at all, it seems anything but vulgar. To Americans, it sounds like a figure from baseball, but it is older than the vogue of the game, and may have come from almost any sport—very likely from cricket, but possibly from archery or some form of shooting. We have an analogous figure seemingly from baseball but possibly from the stage, *put it* (or *one*) *over* (or *across*). There is no more in this of either humor or vulgarity than in *hit*, and no more apparent reason why it should not prove acceptable and useful. Many other current figures show analogy with accepted ones. If the expression *up to* ("It is up to you") still sounds slangy to some of us, and we defend our prejudice against it on the ground that it comes from the poker

Pearls and Pepper.

game in the back room of the corner saloon, let us remember expressions with which we find no fault that come from similar sources. *Aboveboard*, *force one's hand*, even *play a lone hand*, are in good use; no one thinks of objecting to them because they come from the card-table. *Aboveboard* suggests that *on the level*, which still sounds slangy, may prove acceptable—there is no objection to the figure, but there seems to be some mysterious vulgarity in the construction as in “on the cheap and on the quiet.” But vulgarity does die out, even where its offense would seem most rank; women who could scarcely be brought to mention perspiration under its politest name will talk unblushingly of their sweaters. The taint of the prize-ring has gone from *floor* (“He was completely floored”); why should it not also go from *sidestep*? Similarly such phrases as *deliver the goods*, *get away with it*, *all in*, *call down*, *turn down*, *throw down*, *fall for it*, *put the skids under*, now strike the fastidious ear with varying degrees of offense, but it is by no means impossible that they may some day find themselves in the best of company.

Words imitative of sound (onomatopoeic) or suggestive of process often find permanent place in the language, though perhaps most of them have their origin in grotesque sound and humorous suggestion. It may be that the original form of the word *murmur* was funny to people who talked slang in Sanskrit more years ago than we can reckon, and

The Idiom of Democracy.

that some enterprising young Greek before the age of Homer established a reputation for wit when he coined the word that gives us our *barbarous* to imitate the unintelligible sounds of foreign speech, but years reckoned in thousands take the edge off such humor. So do years reckoned in hundreds—words like *jabber*, *gabble*, *gobble*, *goggle*, *gibber*, *giggle*, are funny only now and then to the unspoiled perceptions of a child. Even more elaborate creations like *helter-skelter*, *pell-mell*, *higgledy-piggledy*, *hullabaloo*, *namby-pamby*, *hocus-pocus*, have lost almost all humorous suggestion and are now fairly well established in the language. But *bamboozle*, which is only a degree more grotesque, was slang two hundred years ago (as Swift tells us in *The Tatler*) and is still so marked in the dictionaries. In the same class we might place such words as *flabbergast*, *sockdologer*, *flim-flam*, *spondulix*, *kerflummux*, *slumgullion*, *ske-daddle*, *skiddoo*, *sculduggery*, some of which are useful enough to persist, but all would seem too grotesque in sound ever to become dignified. Other words less bizarre in sound are telescopic compounds of two useful words, with the meaning of both, as *scurry*, seemingly from *scamper* and *hurry*. So *chortle*, perhaps from *chuckle* and *snort*, was contributed to the language by Lewis Carroll, and joyfully received. *Squelch* is accepted by dictionaries as descriptive of sound, but is called colloquial when used as if it were made up of *quell*, *quench*, and

Pearls and Pepper.

extinguish, rolled together and divided by three. *Squeegee*, perhaps compounded of *squeeze* and the sound made by the implement, was used in quotation marks as lately as 1897, but needs no apology to-day. We can prophesy in regard to all these words, only if our ears are nicely enough tuned to enable us to decide whether the absurdity of sound will linger, as with *flabbergast*, or rapidly disappear, as with *chortle*.

In the light of past experience also we may designate certain classes of slang expressions that do not prove acceptable for permanent use, though it is well not to try to be exact as to just what words belong in them. There are those whose vulgarity is dyed in the wool and cannot evaporate, such as slang names for things we do not mention in polite society. Many of these are more ancient than honorable, and the student of the unexpurgated classics of franker ages than ours will get more light on them from the substrata of his own vocabulary than from such glossaries as editors dare to print. The modesty of society, too, often becomes prudery, and banishes to the limbo of slang words which might be useful 'citizens. Such is the history of *booze*, which came to us before the fourteenth century, seemingly from the Dutch, in the form *bous* or *bouse*. At that time, as noun or verb, it meant merely *drink*, and to speak of a gentleman as *bousing* his wine was not libellous or even derogatory. Somehow it acquired the added sug-

The Idiom of Democracy.

gestion of excess and bad company, and by the time of Shakespeare we find it in glossaries of the argot of thieves and gipsies. The process may be understood when we think of the sinister meaning we often attach to the simple word *drink*, which might conceivably run the same course if we misuse it often enough—unless it is saved by an amendment to the Constitution.

Many of slang's gayest blossoms have faded because they have had no real roots in our life and thought. We could gather a nosegay of faded metaphors ephemeral because far-fetched, fantastic, mysterious and unintelligible in origin and senseless in themselves, originating in ephemeral things or circumstances, and made-up words to which arbitrary meanings were attached. A man in middle life recalls the slang of his boyhood with some such indulgent wonder as that with which an elderly woman looks at the fashion plates of her early youth. *Snide*, *cheese it*, *sheeny*, *chestnut*, *spoonny*, or, from more recent coinage, *snap*, *skiddoo*, *twenty-three*, *thirty cents*, were artificially charged with meaning, and their effervescence is irretrievably gone. *Lemon* and *lobster* are nearly as flat. With the disappearance of a certain kind of early Victorian prudery has gone the vogue of such terms as *inexpressibles* for *trousers*. Du Maurier's once famous novel is approaching the vanishing point in the perspective of time, and we no longer speak of feet as *Trilbys*. It is not safe,

Pearls and Pepper.

however, to prophesy that because a word comes from a proper name, it will fade as fades the fame or notoriety of the person. We have forgotten what *Edgarism* is, but we still understand *Bowdlerize*. *Fletcherize* may yet make Fletcher immortal, even as *derrick* preserves in the dictionaries the name of a once famous hangman.

The prejudice against slang has its victories, but it has its defeats also, and there is nothing both sides are so urgent to know as the exact point at which the struggle may be considered ended. To the arbiters, such questions come daily: "The dictionaries say that 'graft' is slang, but I hear the best people use it, and I saw it the other day in a book. Is it really slang?" In other words, when does opposition to a slang expression cease to be a virtue and become merely an obstructive habit? Of course there is no categorical answer to this question; if there were, slang would have less interest for us than other aspects of language. Dictionaries have almost inevitably an ultraconservative effect; in merely recording the historical fact that a given word was once slang they help to keep it so. Our memories, so far as they go, record the same facts to the same effect. Anyone who recalls the day when a given expression was a new-minted bit of slang finds it hard to think of it as anything but vulgar. In 1890 the baseball reporter coined the word *bleachers*, but men now in responsible positions born since that day would find

The Idiom of Democracy.

unintelligible any objection to its present status. They have heard it as they hear other words, and have no prejudice as to its origin. Those of us who used the word *graft* in the freshness of its slangy youth still feel certain restrictions on its usefulness that a college Freshman does not dream of.

Slang is the boiling surface on the melting-pot of language; we burn our fingers if we try to deal with it without sense of humor and an intimate knowledge of its ways. That is the trouble with international comments on slang—British discussions of American slang, for example. By the time our slang gets to England, the specimens are about as valuable as stuffed birds in a museum. Dissection of a dead (often mangled) form of words does not reveal the vital breath of humor. And sometimes slang does not even take form in words, but lies in facial expression, a wink, an intonation, a gesture. There lies its fascination, in its elusiveness—"its very being is its going hence." It is one of the critical stages of language, and it is constantly in the focus of our attention. We might learn much that we do not know about language if we were to study slang scientifically—but what has science to do with humor? Or what can science do without it?



The Pup-Boy,

SOME men won't start anywhere out of doors without a dog; I wouldn't if I could help it. Some won't budge over the threshold without a pipe; neither will I. Some won't stir without a gun; I used to feel that way. Some need a little book to fit the pocket; I have several worn volumes that are good companions. But have you ever tried a real boy? If not, you have something to live for. Of course, you want the dog and the pipe too, and you may take the book and the gun if you like, but you won't have much use for them.

Any real boy under eighty years of age who can walk is good, but I rather like them under twelve. If I want to get anywhere in particular, I like a companion over nine; but for an aimless ramble of short radius from home, little fat legs can do wonders. Sizes from nine to twelve are physically useful and have the pup traits—I say sizes rather than ages, for it isn't wholly a matter of years with boys any more than it is with dogs. Some keep the pup traits longer than others. The Irish terrier keeps them as long as he lives, and is the best of all the canine boys to scour the country with. The others are all good,

The Pup-Boy.

suiting different moods; the collie, clever, ornamental, amiable, suave; the spaniel, lively and sympathetic; the Airedale, faithful, but somewhat blasé and a bit dour, like the true Scot that he is. But the Irish terrier is the real boy, alert, imaginative, humorous, audacious, affectionate, wistful; with him there is something doing every minute. When he trots ahead with his tail cocked and looks back to see if you are coming, and you say, "Having a good time, Old Scout?" and he takes a running jump and lands his forefeet in the pit of your stomach, you feel a strong sense of companionship, and you wish he could talk and tell you what is going on inside his fuzzy head. The pup-boy has all his traits, and he can talk—my word, can't he though! Of course, boys vary just as dogs do, and it is unsafe to generalize too broadly, but if there is such a thing as a typical eleven- or twelve-year-old boy, he is an Irish terrier on two legs.

He is alert; he will try anything once, and he is always on his mark and set for a go at it. He is audacious; he has few of the inhibitions that come from bitter experience. Half the time you don't know whether it is blissful ignorance or sheer nerve that so often takes him where angels fear to tread. He has a kindling imagination that attaches itself readily to things and acts; it is ignited instantly by anything he can touch and handle, and anything he can do. It translates the concrete into the imaginary, and the

Pearls and Pepper.

imaginary into the concrete—a crevice in a rock becomes a cave swarming with bandits and he the chief; the imagined acts of a story you tell him or an animal you describe he turns forthwith into bodily acts with the formula, “Look, he went like this; see?” You win his faith on about the same terms as that of the pup-dog, and his capacity for hero-worship is the same, and makes you feel—well, he puts it up to you. Like the pup-dog, he has no notion of going straight from one place to another for the sake of getting there. Each moment and each place is to him an entity, capable of being enjoyed for and by itself. Your idea is, in most cases, to get on; his is to exhaust the possibilities of each spot before passing on to the next. He is a good sport. When his legs grow weary, he trails you doggedly and silently. Ask him whether he is tired, and he clears his throat and says, “Not very.” A few yards further on, you find a comfortable spot where you simply must sit down and light your pipe. You produce first-aid chocolate, which he receives with glad, sweet surprise. In a few minutes you have him chattering and scurrying again.

Senseless chatter? Sometimes it doesn’t have much to do with what you may consider the rational interests of life, but then, if you want to know what goes on inside the towzled head, there it is. Besides, what do you talk about when you are out with your contemporaries? The binomial theorem? Don’t you

The Pup-Boy.

come home and boast of having renewed your youth? If that is what you want, the pup-boy will give you the real thing. What is more, he will call for all the exact knowledge you have before you hear the last of his rapid-fire questions: "How do trees make sap?" "Why do clouds float?" "What are frogs' eggs made of?" If you really want to renew your youth, get him to laughing—if you try, you will soon find the trick. It is a cheerful sound, and he will keep it up for long stretches, a running obligato to your march. Like the pup-dog, he is engagingly sincere. He seldom tries to deceive you except by way of a joke, and when he is polite you take it without effort of imagination as a mark of true esteem. He does not beg for demonstrations of affection as openly as does the pup-dog, but when you can slip one over on him you can see it strike home.

Men are apt to think that few women really understand dogs. A woman who brings up a pup from the woolly-waddly stage may give, and receive, love untellable. She sympathizes with him, feeds him, tends him, makes him happy and comfortable. He guards her and loves her like a gallant gentleman, but his love "is of his life a thing apart." She is the presiding genius of his eating and sleeping; but eating and sleeping, much as he enjoys them, he will abandon at any time for the more real things of life, which, as a rule, she does not share. His hero for whom he will die, but with whom he would rather

Pearls and Pepper.

live, is he who shares with him the "vivid, resolute" life in the open.

So also the pup-boy. If you never see him except indoors or on parade, you simply do not know him. While he is in waddling clothes it is easy enough; so long as you do not make him afraid of you, you have his full confidence. But soon comes the time when you feel him "growing away from you." He does not share his life with you. Do you share yours with him? You can't take him to the office; he can't take you to school. Take him and a frying-pan, and start for the woods. You need not propose to teach him how to build a fire or fry the bacon; go at it yourself, and in half a minute he will beg for the privilege. In five minutes he will learn more than in many a "lack-lustre period between sleep and waking in the class," and in half an hour you will learn more of what goes on in the towzled head than by half a year of patronizing breakfast-table questions on your part and quasi-respectful "Yes, sir," and "No, sir," from him.

The pup-boy is not a business proposition, but he is like one in so far as the returns from him are pretty strictly commensurable with your investment. If you put in nothing but worthless stuff, such as money, you get nothing; others will get the money—and they too shall reap as they sow. But if you give yourself, you will get what shall be your other self.



Of Woodpiles.

WE were walking, the poet and I, past a low white farmhouse and a tall red barn. Between the two was a woodpile, a noble one, ten or fifteen cords of straight, clean maple, hickory, oak and birch.

"There's a handsome woodpile for you!" I exclaimed.

Even as I spoke, I was conscious that I had said something of the sort before. The poet had not forgotten it; he turned a curious eye on me.

"What are you so interested in woodpiles for?"

I found it hard to explain in a word.

"Aren't you?" I countered.

"No more than in piles of coal," he returned, and with the word he forfeited all my poetic faith.

When I got home, I took up the emaciated volume he had given me, and discovered that he is in the habit of attaching a set of rather pale emotions to characters one seldom meets outside the appendix of the classical dictionary. I doubt, for example, whether he is to this day more than "half assuaged for Itylus" (whoever Itylus was). My heart does not leap up for such as these, but it warms to a woodpile. If I had ever with my own hands inducted a ton of

Pearls and Pepper.

coal from its lair to my hearth and warmed myself by its heat, I might love a coal pile as I do a woodpile, but I doubt it—I think it much more likely that I should hate it. I have toiled over woodpiles when the flesh was weary, but the spirit did not revolt. I have followed steep trails and no trails among the high snows, with a heavy pack, from dawn till “barely time to make camp,” and down to timberline with every muscle aching. I should have been glad to spread my blanket and let someone else rustle the night’s supply of wood and cook supper. But in the end, after putting my last ounce of energy into every log I brought in, when with a full stomach and a full pipe I watched the sparks eddy upward among the spruce tops and the stars, then the woodpile was not the smallest item in the sum of self-congratulation over the day’s achievement, and scarcely less agreeable to contemplate than the fire.

My feeling for woodpiles has a background with which the poet’s experience did not supply him. I am an amateur if you like, but I am a veteran. Under paternal supervision, I began early in life on a load of cottonwood logs from the head of the canyon. On them I worked hard, not for money, but because Jim Corbett was training just then with a bucksaw. There are years vacant of woodpiles between that time and the conveyance to me and my heirs of sundry acres (be the same more or less) of sprout land on the New England hillside where for years I swung my

Of Woodpiles.

axe, but always my devotions have been as steady as fate would allow. I do not boast of accomplishment worth while in itself, but merely of experience that makes the woodpile which to the poet was nothing more, to me a stimulus to the imagination and a delight to the eye.

First, doubtless, for its flattering testimony to worthy accomplishment. The man is not human who, after a day with the axe, does not smoke his evening pipe in the presence of his woodpile to estimate in complacency the well-earned increment. In sympathy or emulation, his spirit echoes the experience when he sees another man's woodpile. To Thoreau, the feeling was almost enough in itself to justify the accumulation of firewood. At the woodpile stage of the process, he felt that he had all the pleasure he was entitled to, and for any further glow to be obtained from his fuel, he must render account in the form of tasks sternly done in the warmth of his fire. 'Tis the voice of the Puritan, the word of the miser. Thoreau is not of the true fraternity of the axe and saw, for the woodpile teaches no creed of asceticism, but releases its treasure to whosoever will come. He was a miser if the accumulation of goods as a means became to him in itself an end. And to borrow a turn from one who had ever an answer ready for the Puritan: if to burn mine own wood freely be a sin, God help the wicked. If you cut your own wood, your fire can hardly beguile you to unearned idle-

Pearls and Pepper.

ness, and there can be nothing wrong with the man who in contemplation of his woodpile anticipates ease, or in the presence of his fire remembers industry. I like to meet the sticks on my hearth as old friends, and to recall former meetings. "I remember you well," I say to a gummy stick of wild cherry; "you are more affable than when I saw you last. I found you difficult of approach as you stood in the angle of the wall." Of course, almost any stick is companionable in the atmosphere of the fireplace, but those you have brought up yourself are always the most so. They are like college students as their teachers see them, sometimes a bit difficult when you are licking them into shape, but warmly responsive as you meet them later.

In days of exile, the woodpile stood among the fondest of memories. Travelling inland from Brest on a raw January day, not a few of my shivers were anticipatory as I saw the woodpiles of Brittany and Normandy, bundles of twigs that no American would feel that he could afford to handle except to burn as slashings, hoarded like counted money against the winter's firing. In Paris, as I paid seven francs a basket for wood that at home I should not have wasted time in cutting except for riddance, and burned it in a tiny roll-top fireplace, I fondly dreamed of the woodshed I had so warmly lined with solid sticks before I left home. At a hospital camp in Burgundy I saw the only woodpile that looked real

Of Woodpiles.

to an American eye. A trainload of wood had backed in on the camp siding, and squads of husky dough-boys were pitching it off—the air was thick with it; it fell in a huge drift nearly as big as the train. It was poor stuff by American standards, but at least it was cordwood, and I took off my hat to the S. O. S. with something like my first realization of how much France prized our help; nowhere did I see her burning such wood to keep herself warm. A few days later I learned the feel of a French axe. Three of us out for a walk came upon a peasant felling a poplar beside a ditch. We gave him cigarettes, took his axe and worked by turns, two talking with him of his service and wounds while one chopped. The axe had a long narrow bit and straight helve; it drove like a chisel into the narrow cut, wasting little in chips and stumpage. We met its owner afterward on many a white road thereabout, and always had from him a cheerful password of the universal brotherhood of the woodpile.

It was a serviceable axe and a thrifty, but I missed the slender, sinuous helve of my own "weapon shapely, naked, wan." Give me a blade that suggests the concave of a razor, and a helve of full length with no treacherous cross-grain to weaken its double curve. An axe like a pendulum has its rhythm according to its length, and if it does not suit me I cannot keep step with it. With an axe that fits, a proper stance, and the right swing, chopping is not heavy

Pearls and Pepper.

or exhausting work. The feeling is that of controlling rather than exerting force, like swinging a weight round your head by a string. After the lift and poise, a twist of trunk and shoulders gives the axe its planetary motion and speed; the arms hold it to its arc, muscles stretched taut by the centrifugal pull as if they were an extension of the helve, but neither they nor the grip may have the slightest rigidity. As in golf, do not "push" to gain force, but drive the bit deep by a flick of the wrists at the end of the stroke. Thus you may chop all day with a merry heart, laying each stroke to a hair where you want it to fall, leaving the end of each stick as clean as if you had sheared it with a single blow. And when you read in your "red blood" novel of what the hero performs "with a few well-directed blows of his axe," you will wonder whether the novelist knows as well as you do whereof he speaks.

As you pile the freshly cut sticks, you become aware that the rows of upturned ends present a rather odd view of your wood-lot in cross-section; almost as if you could see your village with the ends of the houses removed. Here are the intimate life-histories of the trees revealed in the tale of the concentric rings; stories of poverty-stricken years you never suspected, hoarded wealth you never knew, healed scars and hidden wounds, secrets of the birth of new branches and revelations of means of supporting them from the parent trunk.

Of Woodpiles.

Of the wood-lot in winter, normally its busy season, I have not had full experience. I know, indeed, the austere joy of a brilliant morning with the mercury near to zero, the air twinkling with snow-sparks, electric to sight and touch, when even double mittens cannot protect finger-tips from aches as poignant as ever haunted a tooth—but as Uncle Everett, my neighbor philosopher, sagely remarks, “S’long as they keep on a-hurtin’, you know they ain’t relly damaged much,” and I swish my saw *prestissimo* to drive the blood into every last extremity. Here the woodpile is as neat between its upright stakes as a box of dominos, till there comes the slow creaking sled with its “dumb old servitor” to bear it at a foot-pace down the hillside, down the valley, to the scene of its translation into ashes and ethereal parts. But most often I must cut my wood out of season, in the summer when it is heavy with sap. A morning in the tiny cubicle which represents “the study” at camp, at monklike labor laying words end to end, brings me to the limit of my endurance. With axe and saw, I retire to my laboratory where trees too thickly congregate. The sun slants shafts of powdered gold through the greenery overhead; the song of the woodthrush ripples the placid air; jay and chickadee cock beady eyes at my proceedings, one squawks derision, the other pipes companionship. I spy through the shot-windows of my high room tiny vistas framed in leaves, the far curve of a hill’s

Pearls and Pepper.

bosom to the north, or a brush-point of Chinese white representing a church spire down the valley to the west. Here in reflective peace I fell gray birch or redundant maple, or plot and execute engineering feats to reduce the trunk of a big blighted chestnut. I hear a cautious rustling, and a terrier's towzled face peers round a laurel bush. He rejoices on me with flying paws and quivering tail, then retires beyond range of the chips. Next come small bipeds, proprietors and managers of the dog, and there follow endless tea-drinking ceremonies with clean chips and stumps, much sitting on logs and talking of things in general, with observations on the theory of tittlebats. If there is the less wood cut, there is the more left standing.

With the saw as with the axe, "easy does it," or in Uncle Everett's words, "It's all right ter try 's hard 's you've a min'ter, but it ain't no use ter try no harder than ye kin." "Best receipt I know," he told me, "ter keep a saw runnin' smooth is ter slip it back an' forth through a log a little while every day." No stick ever pinches his saw, for he has the only perfect sawbuck, an old scarred veteran that looks like the vaulting horse in the gymnasium, with hickory pegs set solidly in its back to hold the log as in a mitre-box. Next best is one you may make but cannot buy, with three X-shaped supports so spaced that your stick is held firm its whole length and cannot sag where you saw it. If you would know comfort, make

Of Woodpiles.

this creature with legs so long that when you have set it a foot in the ground for rigidity it is still high enough not to kink your back. For a saw, get a "one-man cross-cut" with teeth like a shark's, and you will find sawing a contemplative recreation, for you may handle your saw as lightly as a fiddle-bow with no fear of its sticking and discharging your batteries of nervous energy in crackles of profanity.

My fireplaces are genially catholic in their tastes. I could call over the whole catalogue of the trees and find scarce one, however commonly despised for firewood, of which they have not at one time or another made good use. Of elm, for example, I have never heard a good word spoken, but I have had praiseworthy service from it as a green backlog "to hold the fire." Its unpopularity is due to its tough interwoven fibre which makes it almost impossible to split, and slow to season. Of blighted chestnut, I have burned my share or a bit more, and well I know its skill in high-angle bombardment with incendiary sparks. It does not suit all moods, for it makes of sitting by the fire a lively, hilarious game instead of a period of innocuous coma. Use your chestnut sticks with discretion; put one on the fire when you have a caller who needs periodical awakening; he will talk fast enough when a cubic inch of red-hot charcoal lands in his lap, and will display great agility in hunting sparks off the rug while you apologize for the misbehavior of your fire. Of course, the best

Pearls and Pepper.

wood for other purposes is the best wood to burn. Hickory seldom comes on my andirons, but rock maple is nearly as good, burning with an intense steady glow to a fleecy, white ash. But gray birch, almost useless for anything else, is the staple of my woodpile when I go after firewood *per se*. If it burns fast, it is also fast to grow and fast to cut, and to take it out of one's woods is as good a deed as to weed the garden. The trouble is that cutting only encourages it; Hydra is a pale figure for its performances at producing in incalculable ratio many heads for one. Pear, cherry, and apple, when bad luck in the orchard brings them to the hearth, make the best of fires, slow-burning, but with abundant, steady heat. Oak and ash, butternut and poplar, even tag alder and pussy willow,—I have burned them all as chance and change have brought them under the axe, and all, whatever their faults, give out warmth and glow, and provide excellent wood ashes for garden and lawn.

Breathes there the man who does not deem himself competent above all others to manage his fire; who is not jealous of it as of his honor at the hands of another? So I feel about my fire, and scarcely less so about my woodpile. To carry heavy loads of wood from the shed to the study with aching arms is no joy, but even when I have the choice, I do it myself rather than leave it to one who does not understand the blending of firewood. He will bring it to me all

Of Woodpiles.

green or all dry, all birch or all chestnut. The result is either no fire at all, or else a fire that is about as comforting as a cocktail made by a man to whom all bottles look alike. Besides, I like to keep my eye on my woodpile in its waning no less than in its waxing. Even now I have more words laid up than cordwood; I ground my axe yesterday, and I know where stands a wild cherry tree that is waiting its chance to corrupt the orchard with caterpillars.



The Laocoön of the Shoe-Lacings.

A NEWSPAPER item reports the suicide of a man who declared that he was tired of everlastingly lacing his shoes and then unlacing them again. Petty enough the act appears in the grist of the day's news, but the report of it (be it fact or fiction) lingers in the mind till against a larger background of time it begins to take on significance, even to find a place beside immortal acts of legend and familiar attitudes of art. Here was a man who found the master knot of fate in his shoe-lacings. Was he a fool or a hero? Alexander has fame for an act which as a symbol might have much the same significance, a resolute blow of the sword through the Gordian knot, which disposes of the difficulty without solving the problem. For himself, the suicide has dismissed routine with a suave gesture and with superb finality, but he leaves mankind in the attitude of the Laocoön, agonizingly entangled in shoe-lacings, the serpent routine, huge, insensate, unrelaxing. To this group the suicide waves a jaunty farewell,—“The best of luck to you,” he says, “I’m out of it, anyway!”

Whatever our scorn for him, we must admit that he voices unmistakably the eternal human protest

The Laocoön of the Shoe-Lacings.

against routine; that it is really only in the suavity of the gesture and the finality of the rejection that he goes beyond the rest of us. The feeling that commanded his act is nearly the most universal of human impulses. We all rebel bitterly in the days when heaven lies about us, and the later shades of the prison-house are nothing more than the creeping paralysis of hopeless submission. Only those of us who have trodden the mill so long that we are almost irreclaimably subdued to what we work in, prefer, in times when we have the choice, counters and ledgers to trenches and barbed wire. The lad who with a whoop of joy flings behind him his columns of figures, or vaults the counter in his eagerness to rush into poison gas or machine-gun fire, though his gesture is one of bravura rather than of suavity, is that of Alan Breck rather than of Beau Brummel, makes his rejection of routine no whit less final than does the hero of the newspaper item. And he is not the one in a million who makes the newspaper paragraph; he is one of the five million who make the National Army.

War which cuts down our supplies of wheat and sugar gives us what we demand no less insistently, food for the imagination and the emotions; the struggle for bread is not more close and deadly than is the struggle for emotional experience; we must have it at any cost, even that of the bodily life itself. Pity and terror are the medicine and surgery of the spirit;

Pearls and Pepper.

often we hover about them in dread, and would have their benefits without full experience. Each in his own way seeks these benefits where his nature finds them, in art, in drink, in wandering, in society, in love, in dreams. We follow with Lear over heights we could never walk alone, or with Tschaikowsky through unsounded depths, and feel as if we had buffeted the thunder with our own wings. We trace five reels of emotional life flickering vividly across a white sheet, and are as complacent afterward in our hall bedrooms as if each man of us had descended in whirl of dust and crackle of six-shooters, and left Canobie Lea or Poker Flat racing and chasing like an ant-hill. Shivering on the brink of his emotional exercise is the farmer who says he is going to town to get drunk, "and gosh, how I do dread it!" Like him in aversion to what he craves is Kipling's wanderer who is driven to admire and see. "It never done no good to me," he complains, "but I can't drop it if I tried." Like him again is the devotee of society driven by some unremitting force through endless receptions, dinners and dances which no one enjoys. Even the vague causeless emotion of the night's dream we cherish through the length of the colorless day. On the same endless quest we pursue love, and "take our fun where we find it," regardless of the fact that "the end of it's sitting and thinking, and dreaming hell fires to be." For all these we pay varying amounts of our bodily life, depleting our forces

The Laocoön of the Shoe-Lacings.

of will and of body, perhaps even to their complete extinction, paying in terms of life for the privilege of living.

High as is the price, who would grudge it if what he bought were genuine? Bitterness enters into the rebellion when a man finds that he is not engaged in straightforward commerce, but is paying blackmail to routine. When we come to cast up our accounts, we find that if our romance was pure, it was illusory; if it was real, it was contaminated. Like the "kinds of evidence" in the logic book, we may classify it according to the amount of experience it involves—full experience, partial, or none at all. From the mimic tragedy or the symphony concert we get emotional exercise, inflation of spirit. Without having been through anything, we feel that we are better men for what we have been through. But then comes the day of routine—columns of figures by no means fit for a god to add, yards of cotton revolting to the fingers of the hero, and by the inevitability of the reaction we recognize the debauchery of the emotions. The immunity we have bought is an illusion, but the price is real; we have had real emotions, but only through vicarious experience. We have kindled the fires of heroic achievement, and then left the steam to rust the engine. And to say that *Lear*, the *Symphonie Pathétique*, the movies, as emotional stimulants are debilitating when taken in excess because they afford no expression in action of the motor

Pearls and Pepper.

impulses they arouse, is in no sense a disparagement of art, but merely a comment on its misuse which would apply equally well to most of the good things of life. As for drink, it has as much as this in common with art, that both are least dangerous to their most active participants. He who composes a symphony, or even plays an instrument in the orchestra, expresses his emotions more actively than does the mere listener. He who in his cups resists arrest and destroys property braces his will little enough, but at least more than does he who in solitude "gets sloppy drunk on sherry wine." The worst danger lies as Falstaff has it, "not in drink only, but in tears also." Emotion without experience is the only unadulterated article. It is pure, but destructive, and its ultimate value is about the same as that of anything else that comes without experience.

Love confronts with routine the man who takes it on for a steady job; only in flashes can it be conducted as a work of art. The artist and the scientist are alike in that to each the starting point is the intuition, a sort of emotional conviction of truth. The contrast lies in their treatment of it. The artist seeks to preserve it as it is, to cling to it; to the scientist it is the merest point of departure, and he may spend the rest of his life in seeking by fact and evidence to turn it into an intellectual conviction. The lover for just so long as his phantom of delight gleams upon his sight as a phantom is in a pure realm

The Laocoön of the Shoe-Lacings.

of imagination and romance. If he rejects her when she turns to a woman, even though perfect and nobly planned, and, refusing to establish her as the very pulse of the machine, seeks another gleaming phantom, he is the artist trying to keep his romance unadulterated. But where shall we find a record of success in the attempt? Not even Keats imagined that he could lie pillowed upon his fair love's ripening breast "and so live ever"; either he must "swoon to death" or bestir himself to provide his fair love with bread and butter.

There remain, then, the two supreme adventures, suicide and war. We do not know what the suicide encounters when he so jauntily o'erleaps the wall that has no gate opening toward us, but we have the word of the beginning soldier that the first thing he encounters in his brave search for romance is trebly intensified routine. "Routine is my middle name," he writes, and pronounces stately and sulphurous curses on the day he was christened. He is ready for any ordinary dragon with from seven to nine heads, but here is one with nine fresh heads a day for every day of the soldier's life. Even of the "high adventure" of aviation, a "poet of the air" writes:

"I have no time to let my imagination wander, or my poetry murmur its symphony, or my fantastic dreams to weave their fanciful spiderwebs—none of that. It would be deadly poison to me, for in my new

Pearls and Pepper.

game I must cultivate a cold indifference to danger and a cold determination to conquer. Were I to let my imagination or my artistic feelings loose for one second, up in the air, I should be lost."

Does he belie his words, then, when a moment later he says:

"You think it is void of art? My boy, *it* is the Art—the living Art—not the dream of a poem, but the realization of it—the standing statue, the breathing masterpiece."?

By no means. He merely proclaims the value of experience as the stiffening, bracing fibre of art. It is to art what the guy-wires are to the aeroplane; without it the artist cannot fly, but must swoon, or fall, to death. But where there is experience there is practical detail. No action that is real can be pure romance. If a man goes into action as a play-actor, it is only as an actor that he will succeed. He cannot play football with his eye on the grandstand; he cannot succeed in life if life is unreal to him, if he goes through it "swaggering like the hero of a penny novelette."

Romance and detail!—the everlasting see-saw—one down and the other up; no possibility of perfection even in balance, for with neither dear charmer could one be completely happy unless the other were away. And when one is away the other perishes.

The Laocoön of the Shoe-Lacings.

Whether the soul for which Tennyson built the *Palace of Art* be that of the artist, or that of an ordinary mortal, the allegory is a sound one; the soul fed upon pure romance, upon beauty without life, turns morbidly at last to feed upon itself. Romance without life is unsupportable, and life is routine, detail, the everlasting lacing of shoes and unlacing them again. Moonlight, and the haze of spring or autumn,—by what sovereign alchemy do they transmute life's most leaden scenes into the purest romance? By hiding and softening detail? Yes, but not by eradicating it; if it were utterly gone, we should not have a hint of the sense of fact, a modicum of which we must have to accept beauty. Corot does not show us the formless mist with naught behind it; he gives us to understand that the trees are sturdily there. The very deception of the moonlight is the brilliance that makes us believe we see every detail, though not one is recorded in the memory to tell of afterward. Nor of our most impressive dream have we anything to tell but the emotion which refuses to be told. The emotion of the dream is so sharp that we cannot believe that the imagery is not so too, till the attempt to put it in words shows it to be vaguer than moonlight. But the sense of detail is there so strongly that with the emotion it makes an experience realer than life. So in affairs we call the idealist a dreamer who in the stress of his vision loses his grip on the practical details by which

Pearls and Pepper.

alone it can be realized. Scarcely more effective is the practical man who in the mass of detail through which he moves familiarly loses, or fails to find, the vision. It was Matthew Arnold who called Shelley "a beautiful but ineffectual angel, beating in the luminous void his wings in vain." If Shelley could have retorted from his void, he might as justly have called Arnold a wavering glowworm, lost in the labyrinths of the grass. Which shall we say was void, which ineffectual, Arnold with his feet clogged in a nightmare of detail, straining his eyes toward the gleaming heights, or Shelley with strong wings to soar near their summits and leave his fellow mortals behind? Arnold with his wan hope that

"Tasks in hours of insight willed
May be through hours of gloom fulfilled,"

or Shelley who flew straight to the heart of his vision's incandescence on the sheer lifting power of his will? We need not choose; the vision was the same to both, and who shall say which served it better? The problem was the same; the conquest of detail in the service of the vision, the synthesis of routine and romance, the ideal and the actual—the very consecration and the poet's dream of all time. Shelley exorcised the routine—"Get thou behind me!"—and immediately there is no shadow across his sun. Arnold sadly girded his loins and smote it hip

The Laocoön of the Shoe-Lacings.

and thigh. Here are the two recognized methods of dealing with it, and Arnold himself places them side by side. "Madman or slave," he asks, "must man be one?" Shall a man be a slave to his shoe-lacings, or a madman and cut their Gordian entanglements by a bullet through his brain?

That depends on why he laces or unlaces his shoes. Obvious as the answer is to the academic question, there are few enough of us who apply the principle to life. A man might conceivably lace his shoes with loving care with some specific and zestful activity in view. Nay, the routine would take on the air of consecration if he knew his feet were to be beautiful upon the mountains, bringers of good tidings. There is romance in detail when one is creating. No detail is too petty for the painstaking of artist or craftsman, nor does it matter what he is creating, much of the joy of it comes in such puttering. Gardeners tell us of the joy of delving in black soil, with the fresh, moist odor of it in the nostrils. It is the pure joy of creating—the soil would be unendurable dirt were it not for the vision of the garden and the miracle of its creation, a godlike power which the gardener feels. And godlike is the satisfaction of any creative spirit who looks upon his work and sees that it is very good. The first chapter of Genesis is the very romance of creation, instantaneous, upspringing as in a fairy tale at the mere word. It omits all the detail of which we have since learned a little, geologic ages

Pearls and Pepper.

of fusion, crystallization, grinding, sifting, depositing, pressure and smelting for the making of earth, rock and soil; eons of evolution of the forms of life; infinity of detail, unending vista of routine beyond the power of our minds to conceive, but to most of us creative joy in every least detail is fundamental, our very first concept of it. Ourselves created in such an image feel it in every repeated detail of our own creations. Let it be no more than an onion patch that a man must weed patiently up and down the rows, hour after hour, day after day: it is his onion patch and he made it, and he foretastes the knowledge that it will be good. There is inspiration in the very routine of it, as surely as in the many practical details that go to the creation of a symphony.

True, mere detail is not routine; the point is, neither is repeated detail unless one takes into account the purpose and manner of the repetition. Routine is detail repeated without end; even if there is no end in the sense of terminus, an object in view provided it be creative will save us from routine. Here is for many the difficulty with army routine; the immediate end to which it unwaveringly points is one which men normally hate, and it is kept so insistently before the soldier's eye that he cannot see the ideal beyond. Even if the ideal stands clear to his mind, it is often not his own, but one thrust upon him, and he cannot always serve spontaneously and with love the ideal of another. You may do service

The Laocoön of the Shoe-Lacings.

for your own child so menial that to do it for another's would be unthinkable, and the child makes you love the service, and the service makes you love the child. The dreary, thrice-daily routine of dish-washing may be illuminated as a creative act by the feeling that it is part of the loving ministry that goes to the making of a home. College teachers of English like to call themselves "section hands" and talk of the insupportable routine of theme-reading. In general, we take it about as seriously as it is meant; it is always the sailor's privilege to curse the ship he happens to be sailing on. If it were nothing but theme-reading, the routine would be insupportable, and any man were well out of it. So it always appears to the instructor when in the autumn the first bundles of themes appear on his desk. He knows so well what they contain, all the categories of vulgar errors, amorphous sentences in unformed handwriting. Can he possibly go through it again—and again—and yet again? But in another month each sheaf of themes represents to him a group of men whom he knows, men with youth in their eyes, alive to so many things besides split infinitives and dangling participles. For each one of them there is so much that he wants to do; in each there is something—little enough, but something—that he can create; and thereafter no more of routine in theme-reading. Even the craftsman engaged in the mechanical repetition of a single process may conceivably find inspiration in con-

Pearls and Pepper.

sciousness of the part he plays in a grander whole. For examples the mind turns at once to the past, where we always turn to find romance, to days of hand labor and pride of craftsmanship. But in war, when whole nations are unified by ideals, we read daily of workers in munition factories, old hands and new, sustained through the hardest, most mechanical toil by ideals of freedom, often less for themselves than for others. "Operating a lathe," says one, "is more fascinating and interesting to me than keeping house, or bringing up children, or going to parties, or anything else in the world; . . . I am a blissfully happy woman."

A sure test for romance in art is the fact that it makes you wish to go through the experience it presents, even though the experience be in actuality most undesirable. Romance in art shows us the features of delight in experience that is not actual to us, but emotionally that experience is the realest of the real; truth it is, according to all the verities of life, but it is not fact. So in life, our romance, the inspiration that takes from routine its sting and its victory over the spirit, does not rob it of its reality. We escape from routine by imagination, but not by imagining a vain thing. The mere dreamer may in a sense escape, but his escape is too much like that of the suicide. The truth of fiction and of life is emotional truth; the actuality of routine is suspense of emotion, boredom. Imagination feeds the emotions; that of the

The Laocoön of the Shoe-Lacings.

dreamer offers fairy food, sweet to the sense but ashes to the spirit; the imagination that holds before us the true vision feeds the spirit sustainingly. It does not take us away from routine, but guides us straight through it with a steady light that does not hide, does not transform, but consecrates. It shows us the repeated detail marching steadily to the far-seen goodness and completeness of the work. It shows us truth; and if there is no far-seen end, no hope of goodness or completion in it, it shows us the fact pitilessly. One glimmer of this light touched the suicide of the shoe-lacings, and it almost makes him heroic, even though it was not enough to show him the need of finding a purpose for his aimless activity. Where routine is at its worst, when a man's work is ceaselessly handling the details of someone else's vision, a gleam of imagination will tell him that his escape lies in following a vision of his own; its full light would reveal the vision itself, and the road to it. It need not be the artist's vision, and lie beyond the sunset and the baths of all the western stars. The vision of the humblest craftsman is quite enough, so that he hold to it and feel at every step that it is his own and that it is good. It need not be flawless, but it must come of flawless effort. It is indeed an inferior mortal who cannot find flaws in the world and its creatures, but God looked upon it, and behold, it was very good. A poor thing, only an onion patch perhaps, but better its routine for you than

Pearls and Pepper.

another man's symphony so long as it is your own.
And the more a man reflects on the subject, the more
he wonders whether those who complain of routine
as soul-killing have any souls above routine.



The Trembling Year.

"As yet the trembling year is unconfirmed," says the poet of "aetherial Mildness." He was the poet of a formal age, yet now and then he looked the fact in the face.

"Winter oft at eve resumes the breeze,
Chills the pale morn, and bids his driving sleets
Deform the day delightless."

My neighbors express it in more pungent metaphor—"Looks 's if we was goin' to have winter all summer," says Uncle Everett, with a twinkle in his eye. It is his version of Swift's comment on the talent for the obvious which leads to complaints about the weather: "It is always too hot or too cold, too wet or too dry; but however God Almighty contrives it, 'tis all very well in the end."

At the death-bed of winter we watch with tense longing for his release. We may at first think him dying when he sleeps, but after he has wakened to successive bursts of sound and fury we are fain to think him sleeping when he dies. The snow shrinks to long streaks marking the north faces of swales and ridges. Days rise clear with beneficent sunshine,

Pearls and Pepper.

and sky that you will swear is a different color from that of last week; but by ten o'clock clouds threaten, and before long snow flurries drive past on level winds. But at sunrise crows converse loudly that hitherto have floated silently from top to top of tall pines; bluejays become noisy and conspicuous; nut-hatches talk cheerfully; chickadees begin to practise their two spring notes; starlings at a distance bring you to a halt listening for a new song that is not that of winter. Slants of sunlight from a higher angle make you think you see a livelier iris in colored mists of willow and poplar twigs. Sunday walkers triumphantly exhibit budded pussy willow; but to me he is a prophet without honor, for he dwells on my own premises, and year after year I have seen him slyly bud a few twigs on a warm day after early cold in November, and trust to his fur to carry him through. In the open the snow dwindles to untidy patches like old newspapers blown about and lodged, but for a month yet it will linger as a silver undertone to blue veils in the hills. Wet streaks on the trunks of maples come not from melting ice, but from bleeding branches broken in winter gales. Sugar maples don their spring buckets, and flies and bees that come to taste the sap tell me that birds may now come and find food. Then just after the middle day of March comes a morning when I snap broad awake with a pervasive sense of well-being as from good news felt but not remembered. It is the murmurous rejoicing

The Trembling Year.

of bluebirds so eagerly awaited that it has entered my ears with pleasure before it reached my consciousness. I go to the window and see them drifting northward in short flights from bough to bough of the bare maples against the sunrise sky. Thereafter my mind is at peace; any further activity of winter I know to be his death flurry, at which the year may tremble, but not I.

Windless days come with skies that shed warmth like a benediction; at the foot of a south-facing brick wall, crocuses bloom close to the ground. Daffodils impale dead leaves, and lift them on the points of their spears. The rhubarb pushes the mold upward with gnarled crimson fists which meet the sunshine and relax to show the tight-packed convolutions of the new leaves. On the edge of the ditch, skunk cabbage protrudes its mottled horns. Then for a week the sun sheds no blessing. The wind howls from the north; the earth stiffens about the crocuses, and their heads are smothered in snow. Next come slants of white rain dissolving the new snow, and the song-sparrow sings bravely. The tone of the fields has deepened from dead khaki to olive drab and forestry green. Regiments of cornel and willow shoots make vague blurs of crimson and chrome yellow. Red maple buds have turned back their tiny blood and orange scales, and make clouded color through the rain. By degrees the rain softens to cold mist. A breeze stirs the curtains of the mist, tosses them,

Pearls and Pepper.

sweeps them away in shreds. The whole air moves, and the fog takes up its march toward the eastern hills. The sky is revealed as fleets of slaty clouds beating eastward on a reef breeze with patches of open blue widening and closing in their wakes.

Not all the myriad shades of young green that ethereal mildness in its course spreads on our hill-sides can transcend the beauty of the mist-like, subtly blended colors of bare twigs in this time of the trembling year. At no other season is there such variety of shade and tone save in autumn—but autumn flaunts her clothes, the young year trembles through diaphanous veils. Colors that are plain to name when you look at them closely in small bits, under any effect of blur, such as distance, atmosphere or indirect vision, blend in combinations that defy one's vocabulary. I know an elderly pitch pine, the trunk of which, when "with hands in my pockets I saunter up close and examine it," has clearly two main colors, terra cotta and silver gray. If I look just past the trunk at something beyond, the effect is the same as if I look at it from a distance; the color becomes a nameless pink compounded of silver and terra cotta. So it is with the thickets of bushy alder and birch, which run the scale of color from pale mauve to wine-dark purple according to permutations and combinations of light, moisture and distance. Near by and seen against the sun, alder twigs are a dark indeterminate brown, and the sun

The Trembling Year.

glints white on the glossy bark. At a little distance, with the sun to one side, you see the white of the sun-glint mingle with the color of the bark to make mauve. The pinker tones, mauve, violet, lavender, appear when the bushes are near by and in stronger light; distance, shadow or atmosphere (moisture, dust or smoke in the air) gives them more blue.

Such colors, hesitant and undetermined, are fit vesture for the trembling season, but one there is more daring than anything of autumn, which if it were not of fairyland would set the world on fire. On a little knoll that catches a level ray from the late afternoon sun, I have found a pool of spirit light blended of moon and opal, glowing with the incandescence of a sunset cloud. It comes from a quilt of moss; I have found no one yet to tell me its name, but the children know it for its forest of thread-like stems each upholding its little vase which in summer they love to undress, taking off the tiny Tam o' Shanter cap and woolly shirt. The sunlight mingles and touches to fire the colors of the glossy stems, ranging from crimson through orange and chrome to pale green. They dissolve their color in the light as in liquid or in lambent flame, a radiance incredible in anything so tiny. True Thomas himself, "spying ferlies wi' his ee" as he lay on Huntly bank saw no gayer sight unless it was through just such fairy woods blazing with the fire of spring that he saw the Queen come riding.

Pearls and Pepper.

Now less oft at eve does winter resume the breeze; morn is no longer pale, and seldom chilled, and if the day is delightless it is no recurrence of driving sleet that deforms it. Willows along the river rise like rounded clouds of faint green smoke. Shad and wild cherry float drifts of blossoms like pale sunshine in woods and hedgerows. "Brightness falls from the air" where the sugar maple hangs out its delicate tracery of pale green blossoms. The trembling year is quite confirmed.



Of Stone Walls.

It was a rainy April day in the hills of the Côte d'Or in the heart of the old province of Burgundy. I had trusted to the direction of a foot-path through the woods to take me a short cut from one smooth white road to another. At a moment when my mind was absorbed in thought that left me scarcely aware of my surroundings, there rose to the surface of consciousness a haunting sense that any turn of the path might bring me out in some corner of my own New England hillside fields, or a familiar spot thereto adjacent. It was the sort of feeling that would have come from some accustomed odor, as that of sweet fern. I looked up, and found myself in the presence of a neglected field and a stone wall that was quite unlike the solid, regular masonry of the vineyard walls on the lower slopes. It was of field stone, rounded, weathered, lichened, laid loosely, as if to clear the field rather than to make a boundary. I paused only a moment to look; I was urged to hurry on by premonitions of an impending wave of homesickness.

"Something there is that does not love a wall." It may be so, but "Lordings, by your leve, that am nat

Pearls and Pepper.

I"; and I give you my word it isn't the chipmunk. Observation tells me that it is the highway surveyor. I know he destroys them; buys, begs, steals, borrows them to make roads. I don't know what his theory is; perhaps he loves them and thinks they are dead, for he lays them reverently in the right of way, "looking as if they were alive," and buries them decently in sand. I can't believe that he loves roads either; I doubt if he loves anything but his job. It must be just his nature, "loving not, hating not, just choosing so"—or rather "working by rote in his unweeting way," for it can't be that he prefers for his own use such roads as he makes out of old walls. I enjoy hearing his car go over them; it sounds like a tin-shop off Monhegan. I don't mind the roads myself, for I go afoot, but I do love the walls, the kind they make roads of, the plain, bucolic, Snout-the-tinker, New England wall, with more of loam than of plaster or rough-cast about its broad bottom.

I don't believe the farmer loves the walls either. I can't be sure, because my neighbors are not so much farmers as philosophers and other gentlemen of leisure who cultivate the soil gently when they find any on their premises that is suitable for the purpose. But *a priori* I should say that a farmer would either have imagination, or would have none. If he has imagination, he sees in the walls a memorial to the rockiness of his fields and the painful toil of clearing them. If he has none, he thinks of nothing

Of Stone Walls.

but the amount of space the walls occupy, and is glad to see all that old stone go off the place. Besides, old walls are none too efficient as fences, especially when mended (as characteristically they are) by a birch or alder tree cut and thrown on the weak spot. Whatever the reason, I have yet to see the inhabitant of this region that will not part with his walls at the mysterious will of the highway surveyor—except myself. My interest in the landscape is not like that of my neighbors, for it is largely sentimental. Even the bit of it I own, I do not farm for anything but cordwood, literature and a few apples. It is criss-crossed with walls containing stone enough to build a castle. The highway surveyor has hinted that he would pay cash, and Heaven knows I need it, though not so much as my imagination needs the walls.

Along the highways the old walls are nearly hidden by dusty goldenrod, joe-pye-weed, jewel-weed and tall white lettuce, overrun with grape or over-arched with blackberry. They undulate over hillsides, where puffs of warm wind bring scent of blueberry leaves, bay, and sweet fern baking in the sun. On moist borders of woods they are nearly overtopped by long feathers of lady fern and cinnamon fern. Each wall has its record of human character and human purpose. One will be nearly as wide as the narrow road it borders, and only half as high as it is wide. It has two faces of big boulders, each face a respectable wall in itself, with the "dornicks"

Pearls and Pepper.

thrown in between. At intervals the facing has toppled down and the amorphous insides have rolled helplessly out. It is not a memorial of the builder's art, but of the industry of the man who tried to make a farm out of the dump heap of the glacier. One images an ant trying to handle a car-load of coal. There are uncounted tons of stone in that wall, and the man lifted every pound of it twice; he put it on the stone-boat, and he took it off again. Here where he built his scrap-heap I see his cenotaph commemorating heroic but misguided labor; its inscription is the word spoken of the bull that attacked the locomotive: "I admire his courage, but damn his judgment."

Another tells a different story. Here labored a man who wanted an enduring barrier, and his was no prentice hand at laying it up. One imagines him working skillfully and quickly, ready judgment saving waste labor, keeping the hired man and the oxen busy with the stone-boat, speeding them with pointed jibes so long as they are within hearing. It is field stone, scarcely touched by the hammer except for a boulder here and there riven by the bursting sledge, and set with its flat twin faces showing side by side like butterfly wings. Every stone is rightly placed for stability, looking as if divine providence had shaped it to the builder's hand,—whereas if you ever tried to build a wall you know that providence is anything but divine in that particular, and you are quite ready

Of Stone Walls.

to take off your hat to the man whose wall even remotely suggests such an idea.

One wall we have on our road the fellow of which I have yet to find. It is a retaining-wall round two sides of a knoll of smooth lawn where stands a white, story-and-a-half farmhouse with one sturdy chimney exactly in the middle of its broad roof. That wall will be standing when the trump of doom sounds unless the highway surveyor gets hold of it, and I hope the trump will sound for him first. It was built with loving care, with a forward look to a wedding and a long vista of busy, cheerful years, the care a man has for his work on the first dwelling-place he calls his own, that shall in his thought mean to his children what his father's house means to him. It is of accurately dressed stone, flat layers of gneiss, levelled, staggered and coped. Where it bounds the side yard the ground lies flat, but in front, facing the road, there is a gentle rise. The coping is parallel with the ground, but below it every stone is laid horizontal on the sloping side no less than on the level. The corner is handsomely rounded, each stone cut nicely to the quarter circle. It has every appearance of being an old wall,—moreover I cannot believe that any man in the last seven decades would have put so much work into it,—but frost has not heaved it nor water undercut it. I can answer personally for the last dozen years during which I have watched it like a guardian in my frequent passings. Sometimes I

Pearls and Pepper.

stop to talk with the owner about it. He does not know who built it, but he is learning to be as proud of it as I am, he as owner, I as discoverer.

My dog does not like this wall so well as he does others in the neighborhood. In general he is as fond of an old wall as I am, but he loves it as a woodpecker loves a dead tree, for what he thinks he can get out of it. Tim is a terrier and an Irishman; he has the imagination of a Celt and all the dear illusions of youth. His zest for stone walls is eager and unquenchable; each is a fresh adventure every time he goes over the road. At sight of a familiar wall that he has investigated minutely a dozen times a week all summer, he affects a glad surprise. "Whisht!" he exclaims, or "Begorra!" (or words to that effect) "A jewel of a wall! Who could have guessed it!" And at it he flies, his stump tail vibrating three hundred and sixty strokes to the minute like a sucking lamb's. His inquisitive nose, bound in half black morocco, he thrusts into every crevice, his nostrils quivering with delight at the happy smells with which the stones are impregnated. I suspect that he gets drunk from inhaling the odor of chipmunk, for I never knew him to find anything else in a wall—except once, when a yellow-jacket scored on the tip of his nose, but that did not deter him for many seconds from his indulgence in the delirious "stone fence." Aside from the chipmunk, I never actually observed any inhabitants of the wall beyond spiders, ants and

Of Stone Walls.

two kinds of snakes,—interesting enough, but not to me intoxicating. I have seen both rabbit and woodchuck disappear in the mass of interrupted fern and blackberry that clothes the base of my orchard wall, but I never had reason to think they entered the wall itself. I believe that the woodchuck has behind the ferns a concealed line of retreat to his burrow, of which Tim and I know the entrance well, twelve yards east a point south from the snow-apple tree, under a tag alder bush that has no more business there than has the woodchuck himself.

The old wall is hospitable. It keeps no one out unless it be some clumsy female, such as a woman in high heels and narrow skirt or a cow. It is kind to twilight lovers. Its irregularities are not so slippery as those of the horsehair of the "best room," its seclusion no less, and its atmosphere has more of poetry than formality. Of course lovers need little but themselves of which to make their heaven, but to my thought park benches are poor things compared with a wall I know cushioned with pine needles, where the wood thrush sings, or another that in May is hung with fairy constellations of flowering dogwood. To all comers the old walls offer rest for eye and body. Of their soft hues I dare not say much lest I write a whole chapter. The softness must come from the blending medium, for most of the lichen patches are really brilliant when detached and laid on a black background. It was the Red Admiral butterfly that

Pearls and Pepper.

told me this. He was sunning himself on a gray-green surface of my wall, and I did not see him till he slowly lifted his wings. Then first I saw protective coloring in the glowing red ring with which he is marked, for the pattern it made to the eye was that of the crimped edges of a lichen-patch. As a rest for the body my neighbor philosophers know well the properties of the wall, but one firm principle of mine is not in their books: *not* to perch on its top, or on any of its hard surfaces, but to sit on the ground at its base and use it for a back and head rest. This principle was revealed to me early in life, and if I have by now (as I have been assured) an accurate eye for the spot which will fit the contours of the body, it comes from years of conscientious practice. "Sothe, it wolde be game to tellen al" that might be told of the joy of a pensive pipe smoked on the shady side of a wall in midsummer, "or if the earlier season lead" to the sunny side, in the kindly warmth of spring or autumn sunshine.

A stone wall is like a work of art in one respect, you don't appreciate it to the full, and are hardly qualified as a critic, until you have performed the creative act yourself. Before this experience, you may assent as to a platitude to the assertion that the wall expresses the character of the builder, but when you have tried it you feel that the expression amounts to full revelation. Are you choleric? You will be, perhaps literally, "nettled and stung with

Of Stone Walls.

pismires" ere you have built a yard's length of wall. Are you placid and reflective? You will not lay a yard in a week. If you are testy, work beyond earshot of your wife and children, for no Christian vocabulary can stand the strain of refractory and infractible stone, fingernails split and torn in spite of gloves, skin worn mercilessly down till the blood oozes through. And finally the crisis no words can match when the big flat rock you are upending into place twitches out of your raw fingers and reduces your toe to incoherence. You hop one-legged to the house and spend a week with your foot on a chair,—if the wall is built the stone-mason builds it. If you are phlegmatic, you begin with elaborate preliminary surveys; you collect stone and waste time sorting it by shapes and sizes. In spite of your sorting you soon come to a point where you want a stone, exactly such and such, that is not in your collection. You saw one last week, just the thing,—it must have been out there in the south wall of the wood-lot. You go to hunt for it, spend a delightful half day prowling along the borders of your domain—and then—well, I can hear you saying to your friends, "Yes, I intended to have a wall there, but somehow I never got round to finishing it." And if the building process reveals human character to you, how much more the character of the stone. When you have struggled with "dornicks" from under the glacier, obstinate balls of quartz, flint and granite the shape and size of your

Pearls and Pepper.

head, how you bless the docile layers with clean, parallel cleavage lines.

In my aimless explorations of the woods that cover much of the land between one of my horizons and the other, I sometimes come on bits of wall that linger in my memory for no reason that I can name unless it is the certainty that they are forgotten by everyone else. Going through a bit of woods that looks as if no one ever had gone through it, fighting tangles of laurel and horse-briar so close-woven that I am sure no other fool in Christendom ever tried to force them, I find a long, low cumulus of half buried stone which at first I take for a rib of the hill itself. It is a stone wall, and yonder is another at right angles. I look at the trees and guess that not for the better part of a century has man inhabited here. Among birch and chestnut stand four dooryard locusts, and beyond the wall, which perhaps bounded the orchard, is a hollow trunk which was unmistakably an apple-tree. On the road to Lexington and Concord, inscribed stones mark the spots where men suffered and died; I have passed them as heedlessly as if they were trolley-poles. But here in the woods the old stone wall, unlettered and without tongue, moves me for the old and far-off things that befell men and women to me nameless, as ghosts and the memories of ghosts might stir the spirit more than the acts and bodies of men. When next I see the owner of the land I ask him about it.

Of Stone Walls.

"Who ever had a house in your big wood-lot over on Turnip Hill?"

His look challenges my sanity.

"Ain't never been a house on Turnip Hill since the Lord God made it."

So, then, I have seen the haunting spirit of a farm; it is a stone wall.

The symphony of the stone wall as it comes to me in the hills begins with a theme of indomitable energy sustained by hope and mighty power of will. The second movement is tragic; its motif expresses wasted energy and lost hope. In the third movement, the theme softens to an autumnal melancholy, wan sunshine, a suggestion of gathered forces and promise for the future. The fourth movement has not yet sounded.



“Soldier, Soldier, Come from the Wars—”

THERE was a king in Ithaca who wandered far through years and sorrows, and heard the sirens call. In the end Zeus “cut off the day of his returning,” for the home that had been his pole-star through the epic years was, when he came to it, but another achievement of conquest. He held his steadfast course through the charms of Circe, past the might of the Cyclops, and over all the peril of the sea, only to find himself again, as he had been before the walls of Troy, in the midst of stratagem and intrigue, and the slaughter of men. He found no rest by the fireside save for a moment in the hut of his swineherd; no hint of welcoming love save for an old woman kneeling at his feet whose eyes filled with tears, and an old boar hound who wagged his tail and drooped his ears, but had no strength to draw near his master.

An exile of to-day came upon the book, a mildewed Butcher and Lang, in a Red Cross hut at Brest, a room crowded with exiles whose nerves were tense with waiting, raw with chafing at delays, bodies restless, minds obsessed with the single idea of getting home. The whole camp was in a turmoil of nervous activity blown in waves by the breath of rumor,

“Soldier, Soldier, Come from the Wars—”

finding no outlet in accomplishment; nothing but successive stampedes for new bulletins, and endless tramping up and down the duckboards from office to office, unravelling miles of red tape without loosening a single knot. The exile took the book and read of the homecoming, from the time when Odysseus in the form of a beggar went to Eumaeus, the master of his swine, to the last words of Pallas Athene “in the likeness of Mentor both in fashion and in voice.” He laid aside the book with a new shadow across his heart. Is this the way of a man’s homecoming after years of toil and peril? Shall he find only toil and peril renewed, nothing of love save in the heart of a dog and the eyes of an old woman, and only a night’s rest before he “fare forth again to many cities of men, and death upon the sea at last, foredone with age”? If that were all, it were scarcely worth while to “go home and be a king like other folk.” In spite of all the gods, a man’s wife should know him better than his dog, and one need not hold the homeward course through twenty years of fabled peril only to set forth again “with a shapen oar to find men who know not the sea.” Is all the emotion of the day of the exile’s returning taken up in the driving desire that sends him on, spent when it reaches the goal, all but a dying flash or two? Before he had time to ponder these things, the exile was made aware that his name was on the sailing list, and he sprang anew to the unravelling of red tape. But the question

Pearls and Pepper.

haunted him on his journeys with a vague persistence, and his mind made note of what he saw, seeking in life the force of which he had seen in the poem the shadow, gigantic and grotesque, to learn whether it end in flash and shock or in steady glow, to measure life against the poet's dream.

He saw what all of us see of the homecomings of men, men in hundreds and thousands, the flow of the stream from western ports of France to eastern ports of ours, its branching, flowing, dividing and flowing again; its individual atoms filtering into every place of human habitation, none so remote as not to know its contact. From these emotionally charged atoms he saw flashes when he sought them and when he least foresaw them, and as it was with his fellow voyagers, so was it with his own heart. Flashes they were, and swift glimpses, at first seeming never to go near to the heart of reality, merely a blurred mirror to his emotion; a shifting light, touching now here, now there, on a scene faint with mist. But soon he knew them as all of reality the heart could endure.

There was the last evening of the voyage when he stood at the rail arguing about a row of dim lights along a low shore. He knew the shore, and every town along its length; he was sure he was right—but suddenly he found that he could not trust his voice, so he turned abruptly and left the group. One of the fellows thought he was offended, and came to him later to apologize; by that time it was easy to

“Soldier, Soldier, Come from the Wars—”

laugh. Again it was the Goddess of Liberty; he had grown tired enough of the talk about her; she had never given him a thrill. But he felt it when first his eye caught her, a faint greenish shadow against the morning mist. He was standing apart in a corner under the bridge; the men on the forward deck were yelling and leaping; the band was playing in the reception committee's boat, and everybody was at the starboard rail waving at the women and catching oranges and bundles of newspapers. The point of the citied island towered high and dim in mist and smoke like a gigantic shadow of Mont-Saint-Michel, and for him there was no more peril in the sea.

In the smoking compartment of the Pullman, the exile watched with wondering curiosity the face of a boyish infantry corporal. He had been through it all from the Mexican border to Coblenz, but he bore no trace of it save his service chevrons and the little constellation on his ribbon. His complexion was that of a child, and his eyes were gloriously clear and young. His talk rippled over the surface of his experience as lightly as his eye flickered over the landscape that was now drawing near to the focus of his heart. There was the pond—he said it without a quiver of voice or eyelash—that he had fished every inch of for pickerel; he was only ten years old the first time he swam across it. Father and mother and the rest were coming to meet him—he stood in the vestibule and ran an unwavering eye over the crowd.

Pearls and Pepper.

"Are they there?"

"Don't see them yet"—his voice rang clear and steady as a bell.

Then he saw them and charged. Mother's hat went suddenly askew when the brim hit his overseas cap. Her eyes were shut, and there were tears on her cheeks. Of the corporal, the exile saw only an unexpressive back.

The train moved, and the exile turned to his idle conversation with the captain of engineers. He had been away two years and a half, making roads behind the lines. He spoke easily, but somewhat absently, for the most part of his wife, bravely "carrying on" with reduced income and increased expenses. He fell silent as the train rounded the base of the hill into his home valley. The car window swept along the platform of the little wooden station, and there was the real hero of the war just where he had parted from her. A quick change fell on her face when she saw him. The captain's jaw was set and his lips pinched tight. They clung together in silence. As the train slid past, they were walking slowly the length of the sunny platform, she clinging to his arm.

On an electric car, the exile found another captain, with crossed guns on his collar and three stars on his ribbon. He sat very still looking steadily forward. He caught sight of them at last, under a big sycamore tree on a shady corner, Towzlehead, Curlywig,

“Soldier, Soldier, Come from the Wars—”

and a shaggy terrier. At sight of the car they jumped up, craning forward with hops and squeals of excitement. The captain swung out on the running board. Towzlehead saw him first and darted forward. The terrier was a close second. He sniffed at the unfamiliar puttees, and got no reaction from the smell of French leather polish, but when he got his nose in the captain's hand he went off like a bunch of firecrackers, leaping, barking, twisting, whining, wagging. Curlywig rushed into the midst of the scrimmage, was caught up and carried to the sidewalk, her arms round father's neck and her cheek against his overseas cap.

For such moments as these, the exile may make what preparation he can; rehearsals of them in imagination, however frequent, do not dim their poignance. With places, the dream may be so true to life as to make the actual, when it comes, as peaceful as the dream itself. The old garden flanking the pillared white house had been to the exile's memory through all that was harsh and hideous as a secret refuge, a hidden inmost shrine to beauty. Through every month of the year his imagination had followed it, seeing in his heart as in a mirroring pool every change of unfolding bloom or of falling leaf. Day after day as he walked the numbered paces of the boat deck, his eye ranging over the uncounted miles of racing waves with

Pearls and Pepper.

“No dial shade of any tree or flower
To mark the hour,”

night after night as he traced the pendulum swing of the masts among the stars, or in his narrow berth felt the slow lift, pause and fall of the sea, he drew so exactly before his mind's eye every stone of the path between the swords of iris, the grass walk and the leaning spires of foxglove, the balm and bergamot, forget-me-not and sweet alyssum, that when at last it lay about him in very fact, it slid into his heart with familiarity so soft and sweet that he scarcely felt its touch. Within its borders lay only the memory of placid hours. Of other hours the shadow fell on him unexpectedly days afterward at the little hillside farmhouse where the call had come to him, where he had made the real decisions—but those had not haunted his dreams in exile. He went to the place unsuspecting, walked merrily up the lane with the children and the busy dog. Then while they clamored into their familiar corners of the long-empty house, he went alone through the orchard, leisurely from tree to tree, thinking of nothing but the future stores of fruit till he came to the wall and stood looking over into the wood-lot. There where with a heavy heart he had cut that last cord of wood, the slashings lay unburnt, matted with a summer's grass and weeds that had grown up through them and died. He turned and looked back down the rows of orchard trees

“Soldier, Soldier, Come from the Wars—”

now become a vista straight into the past, of days in Indian summer when in haste he had gathered the apples lest the call should come before he could store them all, the deadness of his heart at the sound of the children's voices and the squeaking of their little wheelbarrows as they busily helped at the harvest, all the strain of the waiting. . . . Then the children came racing down the row of trees, the dog barking at their flying heels, and the bad moment was gone.

He returned with them, and stood on the broad granite doorstone looking down on the road at the foot of his hillside. It was quivering in the heat, and was bordered with blackberry and joe-pye-weed that were velvet with dust. On it moved slowly the figure of a man in overseas cap and spiral leggins, an infantry sergeant whom the exile knew. His mind followed the soldier up the road he was to go, across the bridge where the hemlocks grow over the stream, over the long hill road to the little upland farm. There where apple trees slant sturdily against the wind is the goal of his dreams. He has fought over the ancient fields of war where Celt and Gaul have been before him, Roman legionary, Goth and Ostrogoth, Lombard, Vandal and Hun, rider and bowman of Burgundy, Orleans, Normandy, Britain, of Austria, Bavaria, Saxony—life and death have woven those fields with the richest tapestries of history. Through it all his dreams have been only of the old apple trees leaning to the wind, the gaunt barn, the

Pearls and Pepper.

low house with the heavy chimney, and the far purple hills over which the storm clouds ride. Night and day he has dreamed of them, at Rheims, at Toul, the Argonne and the Meuse, most of all in dust and idleness at Saint-Aignan and Brest. They have been to him the intense and burning focus of all his being. Are they so still as he plods the dusty road? Well the exile knew that he could not learn by asking. He was tempted to go down across the pasture to intercept the sergeant as he rested under the hemlocks at the bridge; but he knew how it would be. The sergeant would accept his cigarette; they would exchange experiences, and wonder that they had not met at Bligny or Vigny, or any one of the "fifty-five more all ending in" -*gny*. But were he to touch on the main theme, the homecoming—"Say, this sure does look good to me!" and further deponent saith not. To the exile who knew so well the electric tension of Camp Pontanezen, and of the nights on the transport when, if the ship could have been sent on her way by the united wills of those on board all straining in one direction, she would have flown swift and true as the homing thought—to him that brown figure toiling up the road was the emotional high light of the landscape. But is there still in the soldier's spirit enough of fervor to illumine those harsh upland fields with the light of his dreams? Has his hillside welcoming love for him, or only the promise of battle?

“Soldier, Soldier, Come from the Wars—”

The nature of a man's homecoming is of the nature of the man himself. Odysseus is no sentimentalist. He looks coolly at the feeble Argos, and one feels that the thought behind his words to Eumaeus is of the dog's money value, or his "efficiency." As for Penelope, whatever she may once have been, by the time we see her she is very much as her lord has shaped her. She has guarded well the things he values in herself and in the palace. It ill becomes him to reproach her with lack of warmth since he has taught her naught but craft. With the dog it is different; you can teach him many things, but you can hardly teach him not to wag his tail and adore you with his eyes, and you cannot inculcate in him any prudent maxims that shall withhold him from spending his last ounce of strength in such welcome as he can give you. The garden does not leap forth to greet you—no proper garden jumps at you—but if you have given to it liberally of your mind and heart and hand it repays a thousand-fold in its soft enveloping welcome. If you have put nothing into it but money, it will not know you when you return. Not often do the gods "cut wholly off from the exile the day of his returning"; they are much more apt to deal it to him measure for measure.



The Ship's Library.

I CAME aboard the transport reviling my luck. My locker and bedroll were somewhere in France, and I had neglected to bid them good-bye. I had nothing but musette and kit-bag, in which I had been living for a month. The limping old *Mudjekeewis* was the shabbiest tub in the service, slow, devoid of comfort. Her engines took a day off every week. Her smoking-room was given over to clacking typewriters which manufactured colored tissue paper orders for the decoration of the main companionway. The white and gold music room was no place for one who was constitutionally unable to derive solace from craps or poker. But when I discovered that the ship's library had survived the ravages of war, I began to see the hand of providence. As I reviewed the backs of the fifty and odd most respectable volumes in tough brown calf, my locker and bedroll "fell from my back and began to tumble, and so continued to do" till I thought of them no more. I was free as air in spite of the livery I wore. I tossed a polished copy of *Mr. Midshipman Easy* into my berth, cast off my shining greaves and brass-mounted regalia, chinned myself on the T-iron that ran across the top of the state-

The Ship's Library.

room, swung my legs over the edge of the berth and dropped after them. I opened the porthole to the deck and the summer night, disposed tobacco and other necessities in the wall pockets, started the fire in a well-crusted briar bowl, and forthwith I was in company with an old friend whom I had not seen for years—"By nine o'clock that evening Mr. Jack Easy was safe on board his Majesty's sloop *Harpy*."

With him I sailed for uncounted hours, a midshipman six weeks in the service who practically single-handed captures a vessel, cuts loose in a cruise in her, quells his mutiny and captures more ships. It is like a child's dream of piracy, like the picture of the chubby four-year-old with cocked hat, sash and pistols, standing with folded arms on the quarter-deck surrounded by bearded cutthroats and ruffians who bend to receive orders from the baby lips. The dream rises from the child's desire to escape restraint. Here is the sailor as an overgrown child, slipping free of the iron discipline of the navy and gambolling through a dream of heroic conquest of Spaniards and French, pirates and bandits, howling gales and crashing surf. With no capacity for thought whatsoever, this terrible infant has the nicest talent for action.—"Jack knew that his life depended on holding to the yard, which he did, although under water."—"Our hero and his comrade had both drawn their pistols, and just as they burst open the door the old gentleman who defended himself against such odds had fallen

Pearls and Pepper.

down. Jack seized one of his assailants by the collar of his coat and held him fast, pointing the muzzle of the pistol to his ear; Gascoigne did the same by the other." And who could have guessed that the old gentleman had a beautiful daughter and chests of coined gold! On and on it flowed, a racing stream of action, melodramatic, but always lively and artlessly engaging; leagues of open sea with sun, wind and cloud that fail not from the face of it, the wind on your cheek and the spray in your teeth, breezy stretches of flight and pursuit across whole oceans of blue water. It was midnight and more before my three roommates came in and began to unbuckle the harness of war, prating of sevens and elevens, of broken flushes and fallen kings. A barren recital; a noise and a shaking of dry bones! What were their paltry stakes to me? Why, there were fourteen thousand Spanish dollars on the *Nuestra Senora del Carmen* alone, not to mention prize money, and Donna Agnes was safe aboard the privateer.

But the privateer was sold, Jack Easy was married and done for, and it behoved me to ship again. I looked in vain for *Wing and Wing*; I longed for Clark Russell (I could have relished *A Three-Stranded Yarn*), but was fain to embark on a land voyage. I took up with *Guy Mannering*, and set out with the Colonel "in the brief and gloomy twilight of the season," on the road from Dumfries to Kippletringan "through a wide tract of black moss ex-

The Ship's Library.

tending for miles on each side and before." We came safely to Ellangowan; the heir was born and his perilous fate foretold. The sound of a jazz orchestra recruited from among the enlisted men came down the gangway like the chorus of a summer swamp, mosquitos, peepers, and hylas—"zing-zing-zing-zing-ze-e-e-!" The cigarettes of the deck walkers drifted past the porthole like fireflies, the smoke of my pipe swirled out and genial scraps of profanity floated in. From the walls of Ellangowan we saw "a lugger with all her canvas crowded standing across the bay, closely pursued by a sloop of war that kept firing on the chase from her bows, which the lugger returned with her own stern chasers." Dirk Hatteraick landed, Kennedy met his death and the heir was carried off. Meg Merrilies came and went with stately maledictions and oracular scraps of ballads. Dominie Sampson expressed his elementary thoughts in ponderous Latin, and his elementary emotions in ponderous capers. Mr. Pleydell brought himself and a brace of wild duck to supper, and whispered to the cook his "poor thoughts" about the sauce. With them all I was well content. The cover of any novel of Scott's opens like a magic casement on a fair prospect of a safe passage to the islands of the blest and a happy sojourn there. Only you mustn't be in a hurry. If you expect sixty miles an hour, high tension, and the clatter of a flat wheel, you won't get what you want. Don't embark on the old three-decker if you have

Pearls and Pepper.

the speed-mania of realism. I like realism as I like beer; it is a good drink, and there are times when it is just the thing, but when the table is spread with silver and fine linen, let beer remain below stairs. The true romantics bring me the vintages of Burgundy. Scott is Chambertin—or Richebourg—anyway, he is the king of them all. Stevenson is Clos de Vougeot, either still red or sparkling. From Anthony Hope I get an occasional glass of sparkling Volnay—and even the *ordinaires* come from the Côte d'Or. Sip them gently; let them settle into your being with finality, with warmth and a happy glow. If you want to get drunk quickly and have it over with, choose another bottle. I was loth to tuck the book in among the cork jackets over my head at the midnight incursion of noisy roommates. The F. A. lieutenant had "cleaned 'em up," and we were to have a nightcap. I had supped with Mr. Pleydell and had my liqueur in a smuggler's cave, but I accepted my modest share of his winnings since I could not share mine with him.

Again I explored the narrow shelves. The steward began to recommend his wares. *John Halifax, Gentleman?* Bah!—Richardson and milk! *The First Violin?* No; Brontë and water. *Westward, Ho!*, *The Cloister and the Hearth?* Just the thing; take them both—no restriction on hoarding food for the imagination. Here are scenes roomy and bustling. For stage the one has the whole Spanish Main, the other

the entire continent of Europe. Of *The Cloister and the Hearth*, my memory from earlier readings held only dramatic scenes of action, the escape from the tower, the fight with the bear, the stealthy hand pinned to the doorpost by a bolt from Denis's cross-bow. Now I think of it as the Middle Ages passing in review across Europe, a flickering stream of life in every form, under all conditions, crowded inns and swarming streets of villages and cities, hut and palace, university and monastery, highway and footpath. It is not a placid stream; too often I found myself shooting a series of rapids with nerves taut and muscles braced. I was tempted to lay it aside till a time when I might want a thriller and be too lazy to seek one at the movies, but it was impossible to leave such a tale half told. With the calming aid of the even rise and fall of the ship under me, and restful periods of vacant gazing through the porthole to watch the sea's "long, moon-silvered roll," I came safe and rather breathless to the end. Thereupon I promptly shipped with Amyas Leigh for the Spanish Main. Here were stalwart, fair-haired heroes, militant Christians such as think little and mope never. Either they are right by instinct, or magnificently wrong. They are chivalrous and romantic, but they do not concern themselves very greatly or very long about love. They have no time to stand tied to apron strings; great deeds are toward, and women and children had better stand out of the way. What shall we

Pearls and Pepper.

say of a romance in which the heroine, all that the heart could desire in the earlier chapters, is burned by the Spaniards as a Protestant heretic in the middle of the book? Merely that if you read the tale at the right age (whatever your years) the matter does not trouble you much; it is lost and left behind in the swift forward surge of the action, the bustle and activity of scenes of arrival and departure, brilliance and pageantry of crowds of soldiers and courtiers, the spirit and manhood of sailor and knight, magnificent fighting by sea and land and the peril of enforced marches across unknown continents. We thrill with these exploits when we read of them in the unemotional pages of history; here they are not unemotional; Kingsley presents them instinct with life and color, "vivid and resolute."

On the last night of the voyage there was no poker, no crap-shooting, no reading; we stood at the rail watching the shore lights come up out of the dark till nearly one o'clock, when we anchored off Quarantine.

"When I get my *discharge* papers," said the F. A. lieutenant, "I'm just going to put on long pants and pointed shoes, and put my feet up on the mantelpiece where I can admire them."

"Me for the overalls," said the Q. M. captain, "and digging in the garden."

"My specifications," said I, "call for a stationary

The Ship's Library.

bed with a reading light, and anybody that wants to can bring in my meals."

I was thinking of the Clerk of Oxford who preferred his twenty books to "spiffy" clothes and the polyphonics of a jazz orchestra. They were old books, and he kept them at the head of his bed, sagacious man.



Progress in Pronunciation.

DIFFICULTIES in pronunciation appear very early in recorded history. We need go less than a dozen chapters beyond the creation to discover that work on the first skyscraper was abruptly abandoned because of differences of pronunciation among the workers. It is some time later, in the period of the Judges, that real acrimony enters into the discussion—that is, with the episodè at the ford of the Jordan which stands as an archetype of all arguments on pronunciation; which no writer on the subject in the intervening centuries has forborne to mention. Both the confusion and the acrimony of these earlier phases remain in the situation to-day. They remain in the same kind, but mightier in degree. If the master workman for the Tower of Babel could have given his subordinates two words in common, “More mud!” he might have succeeded. That problem would seem easy to the modern who must talk with Italians, Czechs, Basques, Swedes, Magyars, Lithuanians and Poles about donkey-engines, concrete-mixers, brick-elevators and thermostats. And to the modern advocate of a single standard of pronunciation the elemental appeal to the edge of the sword seems a simple but

Progress in Pronunciation.

unattainable solution of a sorely complicated problem.

The confusion has extended itself through both time and space as records of human speech accumulate and nations branch and part. Habits and manners of speech are here to-day and there to-morrow, and forgotten day after, till to the baffled historian of language the tracing of them seems like charting the waves of the sea. Good usage of the eighteenth century is the dialect of the nineteenth, and an unknown language to the twentieth. Rhymes of the first quarter of the eighteenth century representing the best usage in pronunciation of London society now smack strongly of the Major Costigans and Micky Frees of Thackeray's day and Lever's, so many words passed in that hundred years from the court of Queen Anne to the kitchen of Mary Ann. Of this there is no better illustration than the oft-quoted lines of Pope:

“Where thou, great Anna, whom three realms obey
Dost sometimes counsel take, and sometimes tea.”

Doctor Watts, in the same period, rhymes *sea* consistently with *way* and *pray*—so consistently that when once he rhymes it with *eternity* one suspects him of carelessness. He rhymes *complete* with *abate*, *deceit* with *hate*, *seat* with *great*, *speak* with *take*, *blaspheme* with *shame* and *name*—and what more could one ask of Mr. Dooley himself? He rhymes

Pearls and Pepper.

despair with *near* and *sincere*, *declare* with *fear* and *hear*, *care* with *appear*, *there* with *severe*; Major Costigan or Peggy O'Dowd could do no less, and not much more. Peggy, for example, speaks of her husband as "the Meejor," which is what Watts does if he makes *despair* sound like *near*. If he makes *appear* sound like *care*, so does Peggy speak of her watch as a "repayther." In his use of another sound Pope is even more Hibernian to the modern ear than his pious contemporary. Pope's rhymes are very accurate, and when he writes:

"Straight the three bands prepare in arms to join,
Each band a number of the sacred nine,"

we know exactly how he pronounced *join*. But Watts rhymes *rejoice*, *voice*, *noise*, *choice*, *joys*, as accurately as a modern rhyming dictionary, and only once in more than two hundred pages of his hymns does one come upon the other sound of *oi*, *joined* rhyming with *mind*, and *join* with *design*. Scott uses this rhyme in *Marmion* as late as 1808:

"Bulwark and bartizan and line,
And bastion, tower, and vantage coign."

It occurs in German in the same period (Uhland, 1809),

"Das dringt in die weite
Wie Glockengeläute,"

Progress in Pronunciation.

and is not unknown even to-day, as in *coyote* when sounded *kiote*, and in certain proper names such as Heublein. So by the way does the old pronunciation of *sea* survive in such proper names as *Sayward*. And if one tries to find out why Pope and Mr. Dooley, Doctor Watts and Peggy O'Dowd, have so many of the same idiosyncrasies of speech, one is almost ready to believe that Queen Anne and Mary Ann have the right of it. Take the word *tea* for example; its history is not simple, but the Oriental word probably sounded much like *chay* when it and the beverage first appeared in Europe. At the time the Irish were first learning English, if they called it *tay*, they could have made themselves understood to the English, French, Dutch, Germans, Italians or Spaniards. If they called it *chay*, it was perhaps what they might have got from Portuguese or Russians, if any ever came near them—so they could hardly have gone wrong except by sounding it as we do to-day. Words, too, like *blaspheme* and *deceit*, that come to us from Latin through French, in which the vowels were respectively *è* and *ei*, would to-day sound more like their source words if we pronounced them as did Dr. Watts.

Examples could be multiplied almost without number until the list included practically the whole dictionary. Even comparatively recent words have undergone changes within brief periods. It is not long,

Pearls and Pepper.

for example, since the comic fabulist (Guy Wetmore Carryl) wrote of the still new word *appendicitis*,

“The fox was one of the elite
Who called it *-site* instead of *-seet*.”

Students in college to-day who were learning to talk not far from the time when these lines were written have never heard any other pronunciation of the word than the one which the fox considered to be the property of the favored few. “What nedeth it to sermon of it more?” All these are but a few concrete examples of the fact that the language has changed so completely since it appeared in the island of Britain that the earlier stages of it are studied almost as if they were foreign tongues. Open the Oxford Dictionary at random, and note how the changes in the appearance of words from age to age suggest the variations in their sounds. The word *lodge*, for instance, shows, as a substantive, such forms as *loge*, *logge*, *loghe*, *loigge*, *looge*, *ludge*; as a verb it appears in the forms *lodgyn*, *logge*, *loigge*, *luge*, *louge*, *ludge*, *lodg*, since the thirteenth century when it seems to have come into the language; an older word would show even greater variety.

When to these variations we add those of locality, chaos and pandemonium seem insufficient terms for the state of the English language. The printing presses, telephones, railroads and automobiles of the twentieth century have dimmed but not obliterated

Progress in Pronunciation.

the geographical divisions to which our tongues are still loyal. When a Freshman writes, "The organist then rendered the beautiful Starboard Martyr of Rossini," or, "I ran forehead on the promenade deck," no one suspects him of coming from any farther west than an east wind can blow an Atlantic fog. The word *girl* in seven centuries of literary usage has assumed such forms as *gurle*, *gerle*, *girle*, *guirle*, *gierle*, *gyrll*, *garle*. We could easily match the list to-day if we attempted to represent what any traveler might hear in the United States—*gal*, *göl*, *gûl*, *goil*, *geöl*, *gyurl*, *gurrul*, *girrel*, *gûrl*; all these on the tongues of the native born, and many others if we try to register the attempts of our unassimilated foreigners. And without adding further to a list of instances which might by reference to the records of the Dialect Society, or even to the pages of our writers of fiction, be extended indefinitely, we may see in this word alone the confusion into which the divergencies of pronunciation in time and space may throw us. Propound the simplest possible question in pronunciation: "How shall we pronounce *girl*?" "Why," says one, "just as we always have pronounced it." Thereupon we open the dictionary and find the first list cited above. Says another, "Just as everybody pronounces it," which brings forward the second list. The sum of the two lists represents the sum of the confusion in so far as this particular word is concerned.

Pearls and Pepper.

If we turn to the "authorities" for help, we are likely to be disappointed. Are they so busy quarrelling among themselves that they have no eye to the main problems? Or are they all engaged on the larger strategy, and none detailed to lead the troops? Indeed, their problem is one of infinite complication; small wonder they cannot reach agreement. The sounds of language, English or any other, are as nearly infinite in their gradations as are the shades of colors. How shall we detect them all? How agree on them? Shall we carry out the gradations of vowel sounds to the n th decimal place, to the tenth, or only to the third? Is there, for example, an intermediate sound of *a* between *arm* and *at*, or is the sound so often heard merely the despicable compromise of men who were born in the Mississippi Valley and educated at Harvard? Some "authorities" recognize this vowel, and others do not; of those who do, scarcely two agree on the words in which it is to be found. If they agree on *half* and *calf*, they disagree on *brass*, *grass* and *sample*. Has *r* one sound, two or none at all? While laymen argue vigorously on this question, dictionaries, American ones at least, remain conspicuously silent.

Their disagreement on general principles is perhaps less confusing, but more acrimonious. Here the main argument is between radicals who welcome change, and conservatives who oppose it. The conservatives see in the shifting currents of our speech

Progress in Pronunciation.

sure signs of degeneracy and decay. The radicals see in the same phenomena simply the working of natural processes comparable to various processes of change in the physical universe. "Change is bad," say the conservatives, "let us have none of it." "Change is inevitable," say the radicals, "let us have as much as we can." They believe that in language as elsewhere, "all changes and naught abides"; that the present state of the language is merely a point in a line, a moment in an ever moving process, not a halting-place if halt we could. To which the other party cries, "Are we, then, to have no standards?" Thus with one faction throwing bricks due north, and the other throwing them west by a point south, there is much cry and little wool. The advocates of standards say, "We must make laws and enforce them." They would place themselves in the seats of the mighty and deliver judgments. "There is nothing," they believe

"So certain to make
Our weak fellow mortals their errors forsake
As to tell them abruptly with unchanging front,
'You'll be damned if you do; you'll be damned if
you don't.' "

The process is less effective than they wish it were, for to the ears of the vulgar their decrees never come, and many of those within sound of their voices dispute their judgments or deny their authority. On the

Pearls and Pepper.

other hand, it is more effective than their opponents are willing to admit, for many of us mortals are weak enough to waver in every wind. In our confusion we follow almost any boldly issued command. "Teacher says you have to say *ongvelope*," Johnny reports to his parents, and if Teacher doesn't know, who does? We imitate almost unconsciously, and after listening to an Englishman (or perhaps a college professor), we catch ourselves, or are caught by our friends, in tricks of speech which to our normal habits would be rank affectation. We believe almost anything we see in print. If "the dictionary" says so and so, who will ask what dictionary, or who made it or how? Even "the newspapers" or "the magazines" are unimpeachable authorities to many of their readers. Here, then, are the standards, such as they are; decrees that are effective within limits. Can we not have sound standards, and make them broadly effective?

"No," says the radical, "pronunciation follows natural laws, and it is useless to try to tamper with them." He points to Grimm's Law and Verner's Law, and the regularity with which such a Latin vowel gives this in Italian, that in Spanish and the other in French. He makes a beautiful tabular view of the seven classes of strong verbs in Gothic, Anglo-Saxon and Middle English. The beginner gets the idea that language is an exact science, no more human than mathematics. Before long he finds his mistake. He

Progress in Pronunciation.

gets befogged in "exceptions," "foreign" words, dialect variations, among which his fixed lights of law and order are as elusive as the very will-o'-the-wisp. It is an error to think of phonetic laws as, in the scientific sense, inevitable and inviolable. The law of falling bodies is a law in the sense that, so far as human experience goes, no falling body has ever succeeded in violating it. There is no law of language that cannot be broken, and has not been broken times without number. The "laws" of language are generalizations that approach sometimes more and sometimes less nearly to universality, but it is safe to say that not one of them is truly universal. What we have, then, is laws, such as they are, effective within limits, differing from those which the purists would make and enforce in that they are not the product of consciously applied intelligence but of convenience, custom and habit.

Such is the disposition of the forces. The radicals are busy pushing forward the advance; the conservatives in organizing the positions already won. There is no necessary antagonism, but antagonism there is and will be so long as each party thinks the other is inactive or futilely busy. And while the leaders disagree, the rank and file have no assurance that they are on their way, much less that anybody knows where they are going. How shall we decide which party to join? We cannot follow the leaders unless we can tell which way they are headed, but we can

Pearls and Pepper.

follow their trails back to their last, and perhaps their first and only point of agreement, and try to make a fresh start from there. Both parties agree that progress is necessary.

Whether or not the conservatives are on the road of progress, we may decide if we can determine whether we could get ahead by adopting and adhering to a standard of pronunciation. Toward an answer to this question, the conservatives help us only negatively. They say, "Without standards we dwell in chaos," and, seemingly, do not ask where we should dwell if we had them. "Shall we," they ask, "have no standards?" To which we might answer cheerfully, "The more the better." If they are before us, they lure us on. If they are behind us, they mark our progress. And sometimes it cheers us on our way to see in the rear a tin standard soldered to a gas-pipe pole fixed in a concrete base with a group of fossils beckoning us back to rally round it with them. A fixed standard is good only when it is fixed at a set distance in front of us like a turnip dangling in front of a donkey. It should be at once as free and as fixed as the needle of the compass, and should be valued for its power to show us where we are going, but should not be used to set a limit to the advance. Absolute uniformity is impossible so long as we have individuality; it is undesirable if we wish to have individuality. A single standard in speech would be as deadening and stultifying as a single standard in

Progress in Pronunciation.

clothes or a single standard in architecture. Is there any one type of building, however desirable or practical, which we should care to see supersede at once the pillared mansion of Virginia, the one-chimneyed New England farmhouse, and the Spanish country house of California? Or of speech that would compensate us for the loss of the soft slow vowels of the South, the twang of New England and all else that enables us to distinguish Indiana from Arkansas, Iowa from Louisiana, more surely than does anything we read in the geography? Shall we give up all the humors of our dialects at the call of the conservative? If what he demands is unchanging standards and universal conformity, we may be glad that he cannot have what he wants. If our language is to be a living language it must have room to grow. With rigid restrictions round it, it would be like a pine growing in the crevice, which either perishes or splits the rock. Doubtless the conservative would say that he desires nothing so rigid. "I said *standards*," he protests, "not *a standard*." But those we have already; they wave at us from every point of the compass. If, then, he goes a step farther, and defines his contention as merely for intelligent direction, a view of some goal not necessarily ultimate and a determination of the road thereto, we may admit at once that he stands for the best sort of progress, and wonder as to the grounds of his quarrel with the radical.

Pearls and Pepper.

The radical leaves us in no sort of doubt as to the nature of his quarrel with the conservative. "To the pure," he cries, "almost everything's rotten." What the conservative calls "decay" in language, to the radical means progress to something else, just as physical decay means change of form, and he ridicules those in whose nostrils change is offense. He would have us release the brakes and abandon the wheel; take no thought for either the rate or direction of our motion—no matter what happens, it is all "perfectly natural." If it were done, the result would, of course, be the chaos that the conservative so dreads, a working machine reduced to incoherence. The radical sees only the bits, and professes not to care whether they are put together as a machine or scattered about. If there are no restraints and no standards, every man will pronounce as he pleases, and that, says the radical, in no essential differs from the present state. The fact is that some of us please to pronounce like educated men, and some please to pronounce otherwise. Not even the extremist among the radicals would have us all pronounce like uneducated men. And right here lies at least one barrier between us and complete chaos, of which neither party to the controversy seems to take full account, the social penalty on eccentricity. Conventionality is the only law of pronunciation that has any teeth, and though its influence is, on the face of the matter, reactionary, it does give us a sort of progress. Even

Progress in Pronunciation.

conformity is an ideal of a sort, and just as social conformity is brought about by social ambition—conduct is shaped according as things are done or not done “in the best society”—so it is in the matter of speech. A schoolboy conforms to the best usage of his kind and talks slang, but he finds that if he wishes to pass into some higher circle he must talk something better than slang. The only law which compels him to change is that which gave him his ambition. The only law that compels us to pronounce as others do is that which compels us to take the consequences if we do not; to accept and rise above the dislike and suspicion with which we regard anyone who is not as nearly as possible like everyone else. The solid barrier between us and chaos in pronunciation is the fact that the path of conformity is the path of least resistance, but it is the path of progress only when it is conformity to something just beyond, and is a long way round compared with the short cuts made by vulgar pronunciation.

“It is difference of opinion,” says Mark Twain’s profound philosopher (Pudd’nhead Wilson), “that makes horse-races.” It is often differences of pronunciation that make languages, and we may be thankful for the vulgarities of speech which have relieved a continent or two of complete uniformity of language. We think of Latin as a “dead” language, but it is not dead except in the sense that we have a fixed and unalterable portrait of it in one stage of its existence;

Pearls and Pepper.

it is no more dead than is the child you once were, whose portrait, unchangeable in any slightest feature, looks out at you from the confines of its rigid frame. "Vulgar" Latin, the colloquial or spoken Latin, which differed from that of Cicero as the speech of our city streets or of our country roads differs from that of Daniel Webster's orations, changed gradually century by century, till the accumulation of the changes of twenty centuries is the difference between Latin and modern Italian. It was carried into Gaul, where Gallic tongues turned it differently and made it ultimately into modern French; into Iberia, where changes similar in process but different in direction and effect turned it at last into Spanish. Latin has changed greatly, but it has never died; it is vigorous in itself and in its descendants. Modern Italian is just as clearly Latin as Modern English is Anglo-Saxon; the history is continuous from one to the other. And just as Italian and French comes from Latin, so Latin comes from something earlier; at the beginning of the process we can only guess. Similar is the course of the English language by branching roads that come out of obscurity on one of which we find Gothic, on another Saxon. Now in Pudd'nhead Wilson's thought, we may assume, the value of horse races was that they relieved the monotony of life, but many groups in modern society have decided that the train of attendant evils is too heavy a price to pay for the relief.

Progress in Pronunciation.

Relief from monotony is not necessarily progress, in language or in any other department of life. Uniformity of language, for example, in the Romance countries of Europe, would have many practical advantages that might have made more rapid our progress in commerce, in science, in the arts. Is there any compensating advantage in the course language has followed? Is the road of our own tongue from its early Germanic form to English the road of progress?

A Danish student and friend of English, Professor Otto Jespersen, thinks that it is. In his *Progress in Language* he has shown to the satisfaction of most of his readers that the "decay" of inflectional endings, such as has taken place between Gothic and English, improves the language, and carries with it no loss of clearness that need make us regret the change. As one instance, he takes up the example cited by some of his predecessors, the shrinkage of the Gothic *habaidêdema*, which, by rolling for centuries on various more or less Germanic tongues, has been worn down to the English *had*. The tenor of his comment on the process is:

"The English form is preferable, on the ground that anyone who has to choose between walking one mile or four miles will, other things being equal, prefer the shorter cut. . . . If *had* has suffered from wear and tear in the long course of time, this means that the wear and tear of the people now using this form

Pearls and Pepper.

of speech is less than if they were still cumbered with the old giant *habaidêdema*."

Indeed, it is not only one Goliath, but fifteen, that this one little word, worn down by centuries in the stream of popular use, has displaced:

"*Had* corresponds not only to *habaidêdema*, but unites in one short form everything expressed by the Gothic *habaida*, *habadês*, *habaidêdu*, *habaidêduts*, *habaidêdum*, *habaidêduth*, *habaidêdun*, *habaidêdjau*, *habaidêdeis*, *habaidêdi*, *habaidêdeiwa*, *habaidêdeits*, *habaidêdeima*, *habaidêdeith*, *habaidêdeina*—separate forms for two or three persons in three numbers in two distinct moods!"

Professor Jespersen points out further that our system of pronouns and auxiliaries which express the shades of meanings carried by the old cumbersome forms is much simpler than the old system of inflectional endings.

"The personal pronouns are the same for all endings and moods, but the endings are not. Secondly, the possession of endings does not exempt the Goths from having separate personal pronouns; and whenever these are used, the personal endings which indicate persons are superfluous. They are no less superfluous in those extremely numerous cases in which the subject is separately expressed by a noun or is understood from the preceding preposition. So that,

Progress in Pronunciation.

altogether, the numerous endings of the older languages must be considered uneconomical."

The change means also, as he shows us, a gain in precision, in certain cases at least. How would the Roman with the word *cantaveram*, express the difference between "I *had* sung," and "I had *sung*"? And if he wished to emphasize the *I*, he must add *ego*. "Note also the conciseness," Professor Jespersen continues, "of such answers as, 'Who had sung?' 'I had.' 'What have you done?' 'Sung.'" It seems demonstrable that the simplification does not mean loss of power, any more than would the use of a small engine to do the work of fifteen oxen.

Now "mispronunciation" does not account for the whole of this change, nor do we, when we so name a part of it, understand the whole complicated interplay of tendencies and forces which make vulgar mispronunciation an effective power in the formation of language. But even the briefest historical perspective will show us that it is a force too important to be dismissed as mere "vulgarity," too strong to be dammed back by the frown of the schoolmistress. The schoolmistress who quotes the dictionary maker as an authority too seldom realizes that he has spent a lifetime in studying the same sort of vulgarity in past ages that she is sternly repressing in the present. Phonetic "laws" work as well to-day as they ever did, and if the philologists of the thirtieth century

Pearls and Pepper.

find no traces of us but Emerson's Essays and a Farmers' Almanac,⁹ they will be able to tell as much about our English as we know about Gothic from Ulfilas's translation of the Scriptures and a fragment of a Gothic calendar. Just as to-day we frown on *gonna* and *gotta* for *going to* and *got to*, so doubtless did our forefathers frown on the slipshod speech that joined *be* and *utan* into *butan*, prefixed *on* and shortened it to *abutan*, then to *abute* (three syllables), and at last to *about*. If *gotta* for *must* and *gonna* for *going to* prove useful auxiliaries, vulgar pronunciation will have shown us helpful short cuts in speech. But the question whether they will disappear if they are not useful is not easy to answer. The temptation is to infer that a pronunciation must have survived because it is useful, even if it is not easy to see the advantage. *Punkin* is easier to say than *pumpkin* or even *pumkin*; *sparrowgrass* is perhaps easier than *asparagus*. If they oust the orthodox forms, it will not be surprising. But why do we prefer *cucumber* to the earlier *cowcumber*? And why have we changed the sounds of most of our vowels in the last five centuries? It might be possible to find a physiological reason, but no logical one is apparent.

If this were the whole story, our course would be plain before us. We should acknowledge that the extreme radicals were right, that vulgar pronunciation makes automatically for progress, and we should have only to pronounce as vulgarly as possible to

Progress in Pronunciation.

get ahead with all possible speed. But it is not the whole story. Popular tendencies in pronunciation are not the only ones at work—to assume that the best progress could be made by removing all restraint on them would be like removing the escapement mechanism of a watch in order that the mainspring might do its work unhindered. And the mainspring and the escapement are not all. Not only are there other agencies than the popular tongue for licking pronunciation into shape, but also other forces than pronunciation at work shaping language. There are doubtless forces and tendencies that we do not so much as know of; of those we know, we understand some better than others. But we may for the moment, with the understanding that it is not the whole of the machine, look at the mainspring and escapement, vulgar pronunciation and one of its restraints, to see how they work together. What we see is individual and group variations in speech giving us ceaseless experiment in sound and form. These are firmly and persistently opposed by various social forces. Freest in their unconscious experimentation are the unlettered folk, who seek short cuts in speech regardless of consequences. Firmest in opposition are the educated, who consciously fear that the breaking down of established customs will impair the efficiency of language. The people, who have no fine shades of meaning to express, are willing to reduce their speech to very low terms. The man with the hoe has thoughts

Pearls and Pepper.

as dull as his implement; a few words suffice for them. As for his feelings, they may have subtle shades, but we should not expect him, if, for example, he were afflicted with melancholia, to care to tell us whether it were "a grief without a pang, void, dark, and drear," or whether it were such that he would fain "lie down like a tired child and weep away a life of care." But to men like Coleridge, Shelley, Edwin Markham, the English language is none too subtle for the shades of thought and feeling they have to express. So we may imagine the poets and philosophers of all ages between Ulfilas and King Alfred opposing the gradual change from *habaidêdema* to *had*, or fighting step by step the whole attack of slovenly pronunciation on inflectional endings. Thus, opposed to the tendency to simplify is the pressure from those to whom simplification seems to impair efficiency. Their opposition should be vigorous and protracted, for it is perhaps our best assurance that the changes which become permanent mean progress. The fact that vulgar pronunciation has helped language does not mean that it is to be practised always and by all; that its influence if unrestrained would be for good; that it should even be encouraged. It does represent decay, and if left to itself would corrupt the whole. In combination with other influences it is helpful, for it decays the surface enough to make it workable by constructive forces; but these forces must not relax; it must be met always by vigorous opposition.

Progress in Pronunciation.

When we have gone so far as this, when we have found a position from which we can see at once two of the many sides of the problem, we wonder what can be done toward solving it. Grant Professor Jespersen's theory of progress in language; how far may it be a conscious process? To what extent may intelligence direct it? At first we might be inclined to give over in despair. The forces at work are so many and so complicated—many must be hidden, how many we do not know—that we feel we might as well try to direct the stars in their courses. But such a situation has never yet withheld the human mind from persistent attempt at the solution of any problem it really wished to solve. One by one we learn the secrets of the physical world, and how far we can control it, and how far we must adapt ourselves to it. In language there must be far more of control than of adaptation, if once we could see the problem steadily and see it whole. Unruly member though the tongue may be, we may imagine it to be easier to harness than the lightnings if we have the collective will to do it and set our science to work on the problem. The first step at least is clearly indicated; we must find out how we actually do pronounce. Without this, the attempt to improve is like dressing in the dark or without a mirror, we may know how we wish our clothes to look, but how shall we know what to do to make them look as we wish unless we can see what condition they are in? Our mirror might be pro-

Pearls and Pepper.

vided us by a series of studies in the speech of different sections of the United States such as Sweet, Jones, Grant and others have made of the speech of England and Scotland. If we were to collect from the living tongues of our own people data in regard to the language of to-day that philologists would give their eye-teeth for in regard to ages past, then we might be in a position to study the problem till we understand it. The next step would be determined by what the data revealed—by what the mirror might show us. We might then know how many sounds of *r* and how many of *a* we have in the United States, and by charting movements, areas and currents as we do weather on a map we might to some extent be able to predict, possibly at last to agree and control. Our hope lies in the amount of this work that is already under way in the hands of dictionary makers, the American Dialect Society, and others, including many individual workers. The discouragement lies in the slowness of the work and the lack of organization and unity of purpose. But we are at work on the problem, and some day we shall have it before us; then we may be able to solve it—if we care enough. Here lies the real work, and such as are engaged in it are the true leaders.

Meanwhile we can do naught but sweep each before his own door and hope that the village will be clean. If each one of us had ideals for his own speech, the language could not but improve; the more of us

Progress in Pronunciation.

there are who hold and strive to follow them, the more will be the improvement. The duty of each is to exercise such intelligence as he has. He who has a strong original mind may be a leader. He who has not must conform, as in matters of dress, to the best usage he can find. At least, he can use judgment in choosing his leader, and common sense in following. If each one of us made up his mind how he wanted his words to sound, and tried to make them sound so without mumble, drawl or affectation; if he meant something and sincerely tried to say it; if he spoke from a full mind, a full heart, full lungs (and an empty nose)—he might safely leave the rest to “laws”—or chance.



Lear's Characters.

SEARCHING as has been the literary and scientific analysis of *The Nonsense Book*, it is an undeniable fact that no one has as yet adequately discussed the masterly characterization of Lear's narratives, or unveiled the trenchant social satire hitherto concealed behind the mysterious "they" of the so-called limericks.

It need only be pointed out to be instantly admitted that "they" represents a composite social force, which appears with significant regularity in the third line of the stanza, the third act of the compact little drama. It is an embodied social consciousness, invariably reactionary; to the protagonist, always an obstacle representing the pressure of conventionality. This pressure curbs the free spirit of the Old Man with the Gong, whom "they smashed," and, with less excuse, suppresses the imaginative effort of the Old Man of Whiteheaven, "who danced a quadrille with a raven," by the same crude method. By methods not physical but quite as brutal, the same effect is obtained on the Old Man in a Boat,

"Who said 'I'm afloat! I'm afloat!'
When they said 'No, you ain't!'
He was ready to faint."

Lear's Characters.

"They" ostracize the Old Man of Thermopylae for discovering a new method of boiling eggs. Such is the fate of old men who see visions; such also that of youth when it sets foot to the untrodden ways. The Young Lady of Sweden fares forth hesitantly ("by the slow train") to meet a world of romance, but turns tragically back from Weedon Station when confronted by "their" cynical sense of fact. For it is on fact that "they" insist in every case. It is a fact hurled like a brickbat that destroys the spiritual and physical consciousness of the Old Man in a Boat; right and left they hurl insistently their pragmatic demands: "Tell us why?" "they" demand of the Old Person of Deal, "Is it small?" "Is it hot?" (of the crater of Etna) "Are these caps?" "Are you dumb?" "They" ask, perpetually confronting the explorer of the infinite with the finite, the static. The stories of the old gentlemen from Deal, Melrose, Thermopylae, show "them" stolidly objecting to the unusual purely as such. "They" have a talent for the obvious that is little short of maddening; witness their verdict on the Old Person of Ems

"Who casually fell in the Thames,
And when he was found
They said he was drowned."

"Their" social exclusiveness as expressed in their conduct toward the Old Person of Bow

Pearls and Pepper.

“Whom nobody happened to know,
So they gave him some soap
And said coldly, ‘We hope
You will go back directly to Bow,’ ”

receives its snub at the hands of the irrepressible Old
Person of Burton, who

“When they said, ‘How d’ye do?’
He replied, ‘Who are you?’ ”

and he was probably nothing better than a brewer, though he may in those days have been immensely rich. The worm turns at last, and the outcome of our present day social unrest is uncannily foreshadowed in that cryptic ballad which depicts so graphically the “red” forces (symbolized by the red ochre) knocking “them” all down with a poker.

In all his characterization, we note the sympathy, the insight, the adroitness of the master in his adaptation of method to the purpose in view. Lear is supreme with whatever weapon comes to his hand. What could surpass the subtle irony with which he comments on the beguilement of sex by sex in the two vignettes which stand side by side in all editions of his works:

I

“There was an Old Man who said, ‘How
Shall I flee from this horrible Cow?
I will sit on this stile
And continue to smile,
Which may soften the heart of this Cow.’ ”

Lear's Characters.

II

"There was a Young Lady of Hull,
Who was chased by a virulent Bull;
But she seized on a spade,
And called out, 'Who's afraid?'
Which distracted that virulent Bull."

But when beguilement turns to brute force the colors
turn sombre;

"There was an Old Man on some rocks
Who shut up his wife in a box.
When she cried, 'Let me out!'
He replied, 'Without doubt
You will spend all your life in that box.'"

Here is all the tragedy of woman suppressed and imprisoned by inexorable man. Indeed, tragedy is often the theme of these works. In *Calico Pie* is all the tragedy of evanescence, the things that depart never to return, of all things beautiful and brief:

"Their wings were blue,
And they sang 'Tilly-loo,'
And away they flew,
And they never came back to me!"

All the tragedy of misplaced gifts is in the poignant little ballad of *The Daddy Long-Legs and the Fly*, the close of which, the finding of the little boat and the intrepid venture forth into the unknown in search of the ideal, reminds one of *Alastor*. It serves,

Pearls and Pepper.

together with the more realistic *Owl and the Pussy-cat*, and even the clearly etched *Tale of the Jumblies*, as a preliminary study of the vicissitudes of the band of romantic wanderers, *The Four Children*, which stands with *Alastor*, *Endymion*, and *Childe Harold*, to make up the epic of the spirit which, at any cost, turns its back on the actual and seeks to realize the "Vision of the Unknown." To attempt further comment on the symbolism of this prose poem is to tread on dangerous ground, but we may commend without reserve Lear's delicate adumbration of the characters; his sympathy with aspiring youth and femininity expressed in the softly shaded character of Violet, the warm-hearted, experimental seeker. Hers is the idea of churning sea-water (what matter though it fail?), and hers the altruistic knitting of garments for the needy inmates of the waters over which they pass. We see Lionel's vivacity exercised for the delectation of others in time of gloom; we revel in Guy's intriguing puerility; we delight in Slingsby, weaver of words. And note how lightly the characters of all four are touched out in their parting gifts to the Bluebottle Flies. Such characterization appears in all Lear's work, even in one, doubtless the only one, having no sociological import, the sweet domestic idyll of the Spikky Sparrows, which is sung between passages of profound significance as winningly as a pastoral symphony, a true "lyric interlude in man's strenuous existence."

Lear's Characters.

The soundness of these observations can hardly be challenged save on the basis of the doubtful limericks. Of these the testimony may be unhesitatingly rejected, for the most superficial examination of internal evidence shows them to be, one and all, spurious. Controversy has long raged about the Old Man of New Salem,

“Who used to catch flies and impale ’em.
When the critters were thin,
He worked with a pin,
But when they were fat, he would nail ’em.”

One needs here no more than the simple expedient of placing the narrative side by side with an unchallenged example of Lear's treatment of the motif:

“There was a young lady of Troy,
Whom several large flies did annoy;
Some she killed with a thump,
Some she drowned at the pump,
And some she took with her to Troy.”

Internal evidence tells the story so clearly that other comment is unnecessary.



The Work of Thomas Hardy.

"ONE writing of heroes," the favorite author of a certain Mr. Nevil Beauchamp, tells us that the open secret is divulged to each age by its fit hero, and that the age of the prophet shall not hear it from the lips of the man of letters. Once in a while,—and this he does not tell us,—a hero of an earlier time comes forward again to sing in no disharmony with his latter day brethren his version of the song. The song is all one, and its name is *The Meaning of Life*. To Thomas Hardy life means what it meant of old to the northern singers. His expression of it is in images like to theirs; and could we trace the growth of their thought as we can of his, we might find the two alike in their beginning, and in their increase in vigor and scope. Hardy's thought is that of the age when the hero was a god; he is as Odin in the twentieth century, and he sings us the epic of our forefathers.

When we enter Barsetshire with Trollope we are in the midst of Victorian England. When with Hardy we enter Wessex, we are in a Saxon kingdom that has not been on the map since there have been maps,—even as an earldom it seems to have disappeared about the time of the Norman Conquest. Doubtless

The Work of Thomas Hardy.

he adopts the name for no conscious motive but to signal his departure from fact, but to the reader it soon becomes symbolic of his outlook on life,—Saxon and not English; ninth century and not nineteenth. It is there he stands; and whatever there is of the new age in his books he shows us down the perspective of ten centuries, outlines merely through the mists of time. In the Saxon kingdom his feet are firmly planted. There with him we are forever in the presence of memorials of the older peoples,—their burial places, mounds and barrows, their monuments, Stonehenge and the druid circle. He has a haunting sense of the primitive in character. He sees his figures against the background of their ancestry; their acts are one with those of family, race or tribe. And in this the distinctive thing is, not that he sees in heredity one of the forces, perhaps the main force, of the fate in the hands of which his characters are helpless, but that to him tribal and racial origins are uniformly Norse or Germanic. Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Norwegians, Swedes and Danes; sea-robbers sweeping the coasts of Sussex, Wessex and Kent; foray, raid and reprisal; these are the forces that mold his men and women. There is an occasional Roman legion that comes and goes with no other effect than to give a name to the place of its encampment. In the formation of character Hardy recognizes no force that was not at work before the coming of the Normans.

Pearls and Pepper.

Norse or Germanic, our ancestors had an outlook on life that was neither clear nor bright. They were not thinkers; they did not often pause to look ahead, but when they did they saw a gloom and obscurity they could not penetrate. Beauty must perish; Baldur must die; Loki prevails that he shall not return. However much or little they believed in life after death, they could not see beyond the grave. The abodes of the dead are earthy, damp, cold and sunless as the grave itself; the road to them, whether it be mortal or immortal that travels it, leads ever downward and northward. Hardly better off than mankind are the gods themselves, who, over their own fate or that of men, have little power. They are primitive ideals, glorified men, heroes writ large, magnificent in physical strength, their craft increased by magic and freedom from natural law, but there is in them nothing of the spirit, and their power is not from it. In the last cataclysm they go down before huge insensate powers, the Fenris Wolf and the Midgard Serpent. They know they are to die, and they go gloriously to their end at the hands of a senseless inexorability. There are hints of a sunrise to follow the twilight of the gods, but they are vaguer even than the nature of the end. It is the mythology of a race of fighters whose minds do not reach beyond their own experience. Their imagination is as a mirror, or a series of mirrors which reflect back and forth one into another successively fainter images of

The Work of Thomas Hardy.

the same thing. Without going into the nature and origin of myth one may be permitted to see here the cycle of good and evil, summer and winter, getting vaguer as it gets more remote from life, lingering always on the winter, the cheerless cold, the longest part of the year. And whatever we may believe about the origin of it all we must feel that there is something here of the influence of nature on mood and thought. We see man in the grip of the iron frost, which relaxes only long enough to give him an elusive ray of hope. Inexorable as the cold may be, hope flickers bravely through to the end. Even in the last and longest winter of all the man thinks that if only he could survive long enough there might be spring-time beyond.

All this is, of course, the Norse mythology, but it represents accurately enough the outlook on life of our Germanic ancestors. The *Beowulf* is their epic, the one piece of literature we have which they brought with them from the continent. In it the only religious principle that is expressed is "Gath â wyrd swâ hîo scel"—Goeth ever fate as it will—which is after all about the only fixed principle we find in any heathen religion. It means that in the ultimate power the man sees no thinking being like himself. In the dawning of religious thought he creates gods in his own image, exalted men. He makes them thinking beings, powers for good in the main, so far as their powers go. But as he thinks further he sees good

Pearls and Pepper.

constantly overcome by evil; there must be a blind power stronger than the gods. They, though their power is less, are not blind. It is as if Ulysses were shut into the cave with the maddened and blinded Polyphemus—and that, one must think, would have been the situation if the northern peoples had told the story; it is the cheerful southern races who allow the sailors to escape. From the forces outside yourself, then, you have nothing to hope. Within, there is something more, but only so much of comfort as lies in your sense of superiority to the Polyphemus fate. This sense is based on the rationality and justice of your actions. You cannot respect fate. If you can respect yourself you are superior. Cling to your self-respect, then, for it is all you have. And this our forefathers did in something the spirit of the Earl's daughter in Stevenson's fable: "I have no heart for it," said she, "but it is all God offers."

Although this is the mood of a race of fighters, it is not the simple faith of men of action who might be expected to have an instinctive trust in the "liveableness of life" and the "ultimate decency of things." They have begun to think, see no logic in the universe, and have not reasoned round to faith again; started with Thor, Odin and Baldur, saw the fate beyond them, but were unable to see beyond that. It is in a similar way that the idea seems to take shape in Hardy's mind. It is the same idea of fate, growing larger and more grim as he goes on, and con-

The Work of Thomas Hardy.

stantly shadowed forth in his mind in terms of the nature against which he sees man struggling. This is the background against which we can see the figure of Thomas Hardy most distinctly. In it we can trace the pattern of his mood, and, seemingly, its origin, and in it we can see the elements of his greatness. It is in this sense that Hardy's message seems to come to us from the fathers of our race. That it is epic in its subject matter can be shown even more clearly.

"Fate goeth ever as it will." As in the *Beowulf* so in Hardy we look in vain for any other fixed theory. In the poem entitled "Subalterns" we see the forces of nature moving as impotently as man. The God to whom they are subordinate, however, is the impersonation of the senseless inexorability of the northern religion. In the poem "God Forgotten" we have our only glimpse of him as a rational being,—rational, but far from infallible, for he has forgotten the existence of this suffering planet. More characteristic is "New Year's Eve," in which God has neither thought nor feeling, but merely power. "My labors logicless," he says, "you may explain, not I." "Sense-sealed I have wrought," he continues, and when he opens the new year he weaves it "by rote as heretofore," and continues "in his unweeting way," as unbending as the Moving Finger of the oriental fate. It is the very Setebos of Caliban—a power that accords to man precisely the treatment that Caliban might accord to the crabs that are at his mercy, such

Pearls and Pepper.

treatment, for example, as is given to the Dame of Athelhall (*Poems of the Past and Present*) or to Phillis Grove in "The Melancholy Hussar of the German Legion" (*Life's Little Ironies*). In the poem entitled "The King's Experiment" this irony is pointed out directly as humor on the part of King Doom.

If this be Hardy's view of the problem—and it needs no piling up of citations from the whole series of his novels to show that it is—his friends might well be called upon to show cause why he should be read. Ask them and they tell of his "optimism," heroic optimism, in unflinching recognition of the facts and the belief that the world is good in spite of all the bad there is in it. It is the creed of the man who

"Never dreamed though right were worsted wrong
would triumph;

Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
sleep to wake."

That Hardy faces the darker facts without flinching no one has ever thought of denying—his friendly critics demonstrate it again and again, perhaps because it is so much easier to prove than that he sees the ultimate good beyond. Of this last, one of the more specific expressions is worth quoting:

"Egdon Heath in the *Return of the Native* stands as Hardy's supreme personification of the infinite in

The Work of Thomas Hardy.

terms of natural phenomena. . . . Vast, dark, imperturbable, eternal, it crushes out alike indifferently the lives of heroes and dastards, and punishes with despotic irony all their efforts to escape their doom. . . . Nevertheless, this is but one side of the shield. True, nature in her beauty is often indifferent to the special needs of man, and in her sublimity she is often terrible, but we must never forget that she is actually beautiful and actually sublime. . . . He repines at her destructiveness but at the same moment he thrills us with the sense of her power and majesty and eternal dignity. For him the life-giving and life-destroying earth is also life-beautifying.”* If this be optimism it is heroic indeed. We are told that if we are to be crushed by nature representing fate, it is sufficient compensation to us that she is beautiful. We are to come gladly to our race against this Atalanta, content that the headsman’s sword awaits us at the end of it,—and it is no less the headsman’s sword for being wreathed in flowers,—sufficiently rewarded by the revelations of beauty that are ours during the struggle. That nature is life-destroying is balanced by the fact that she is life-giving, and life is hers to take. To most of those who utter it, this is the cry of Job, a cry of resignation rather than of optimism.

At the time he embodied his conception of the infinite in Egdon Heath, Hardy’s idea may have been

* E. S. Bates, *International Journal of Ethics*, 1905.

Pearls and Pepper.

not unlike that set forth by Mr. Bates. Later, however, blindness and power are more in his mind than beauty and sublimity, and to-day one almost inevitably interprets the Egdon Heath idea in the light of the later passages. In *The Dynasts*, the Spirit of the Pities implores the Immanent Will to spare the human victims of the tragedy, whereupon the Spirit of the Years says

“Then note anew
(Since ye forget) the ordered potencies,
Nerves, sinews, trajects, eddies, ducts, of It.
The Eternal Urger, pressing change on change.”

“. . . a preternatural clearness possesses the atmosphere of the battlefield in which the scene becomes anatomized, and the living masses of humanity transparent. The controlling Immanent Will appears therein, as a brain-like network of currents and ejections, twitching, interpenetrating, entangling, and thrusting hither and thither the human forms.”

Whereupon the Ironic Spirits comment as follows:

“Stand ye apostrophizing That
Which, working all, works but thereat
Like some sublime fermenting-vat
Heaving throughout its vast content
With strenuously transmutive bent
Though of its aim unsentient?”

The Work of Thomas Hardy.

Here Fate, Nature, the Immanent Will, the World Soul,—whatever we call the power to which Hardy accords a capital letter but denies the personal pronoun,—offers us no sublimity save that of a fermenting-vat by way of compensation for the suffering. If, however, we can let Egdon Heath stand by itself, Mr. Bates is certainly right in seeing both sublimity and beauty, and whether Hardy means it so or not, these qualities do compensate the victims of fate for what they helplessly undergo. The fact is we do offer ourselves for the race, and end it not in fear of the sword, but reluctance to leave the sight of the beauty that has been before us throughout the course. This is surely optimism; if Hardy expresses it, it is his; if his friends find it in his transcript of life as they find it in life itself, it is theirs.

Another compensation for the struggle which Hardy's friends find in his view of life, is its effect on human character. Hardy does not explicitly call man the master of his fate and the captain of his soul as does Henley, but he sets forth some such idea in the story of the life and death of Michael Henchard. His character has a force which brings upon the man troubles unknown to Farfrae, whose life runs smoothly because he is "just like everybody else." Henchard is superior to the fate which pursues him; so is Tess Durbeyfield; and whether they gain strength from the struggle, they have in Hardy's thought the comfort that comes from a mind con-

Pearls and Pepper.

scious of its own integrity. From George Eliot's novels we get a similar impression. They leave with us a sense of the impotence of man as opposed to the forces of heredity and tradition. The best she sees in the struggle is the beauty of character that may come out of it. Yet, even if the effect is the same, to say that George Eliot is not a pessimist is not to say that Hardy is an optimist. Dark as her view of the matter is, there is more of light in it than there is in Hardy's. George Eliot takes it for granted that the beauty and strength of character are worth while. We are not sure what value Hardy attaches to them; little or none in this world surely, if we are to judge by the fates he allots to Michael Henchard and to Tess. If we go a step farther and compare Hardy's view with that of the most obvious expression of faith in the ultimate good, "Be good and you will be happy," the contrast is not so complete as at first sight it might appear. If the utterer of these words thinks at all, he does not mean that worldly prosperity will follow recitude of conduct as a consequence—Eliphaz and Bildad struggled vainly to uphold that view. If he means that with the peace that attends an untroubled conscience you may be happy if the circumstances will let you, and that without it you cannot be happy be the circumstances what they may, he goes no farther than Hardy himself. In actual knowledge optimist and pessimist stand on the same plane; it is faith that makes the difference between them.

The Work of Thomas Hardy.

Hardy is just as much the optimist as a man can be without faith, and to most of us that means that he is a pessimist. And even in fatalism there are degrees. To most minds there is a wide separation between the passive oriental "Drink, for ye know not whence ye come nor why!" and the northern idea of "one last fight and the best," be the end what it may. Hardy may not have quite so much faith in the gospel of salvation by fighting as do Beowulf and Wiglaf, but between him and the roses and red wine there is an unbridgeable gulf.

"Life's impulsion by Incognizance"—this phrase from *The Dynasts* shows us Hardy's idea of God and the ways of God to man. If this were all, it were what many a fool hath said in his heart, or from the housetops, with never a suggestion of either myth or epic. In Hardy's work as a whole there is an epic quality which lies in what has been cited as the personification of the infinite in nature and in man, even as the older singers expressed it in finite terms of hero or of god. Just as the Northern gods turn our minds constantly toward a symbolic view of the processes of nature, so Hardy keeps before us always a partial or complete identification of nature with the fate which oppresses mankind. Of this the best example is the one already so often mentioned, the description of Egdon Heath. In *Two on a Tower* it appears in Hardy's expressed wish—amply fulfilled—"to set the emotional history of two infinitesimal

Pearls and Pepper.

lives against the stupendous background of the stellar universe." This universe plays precisely the same part in the novel that Egdon Heath plays in *The Return of the Native*, and might be described in identical terms: "a personification of the infinite in terms of natural phenomena"; "vast, dark, imperturbable, eternal." In *The Woodlanders* is the same conception of nature; we are never away from it; not only does it brood over the whole action of the tale, but the characters are almost bodily identified with the functions they perform as if they were the half-gods of the myths, eternal as the seedtime and the harvest. Marty South, when she and Winterbourne are planting the young pines, is at one with the trees as if she were a very dryad. Winterbourne shows like a god of the cider harvest when Hardy describes him as "Autumn's very brother," and we remember his glowing sister, drawn by Keats, as she sits beside the cider-press. Marty South again Hardy immortalizes in the fidelity of her love as she stands alone at last at the grave of Winterbourne, "and looked almost like a being who had rejected with indifference the attribute of sex for a loftier quality of abstract humanism."

It is true of course that all literature in shadowing forth the meaning of life shows us the permanent and abstract in human terms, and every artist, almost from the very fact, is a myth maker. The point is merely that Hardy's myths are not those of the

The Work of Thomas Hardy.

Ægean or the Adriatic, but of the North Sea and the Baltic. His god of the harvest does not tread the grape, but presses the apple; his background is the sinister gloom of the heath or the vacant horror of the stellar spaces. And as the myth stories accumulate into the epic, so in Hardy the constant presence of the idea of fate in terms of the nature against which man struggles grows greater, more oppressive, more grim, as his work goes on. It would be possible to trace this growth through his novels; it is not an even movement, it ebbs and flows somewhat, but it reaches at various periods certain fairly definite stages which are marked by one and another of the novels until it reaches *The Dynasts*, in which the epic quality must be reckoned with. It is a dramatization of the epic that challenges both Shelley and Byron. Shelley's attempt soars higher than Hardy's, and Byron's is more dramatic, but neither is so concrete. Byron, like Hardy, is expressing the unweeting way of the Immanent Will; he is epic, for the ways of God to man are epic matters always. But in *Cain* the man is Byron; so also is Lucifer. Byron is satanic in his vain dashings against the citadel of Heaven. Hardy contemptuously lets the citadel alone and gives his attention to his fellow victims. In this his spirit is not like Shelley's, one of pity and sympathy; his attempt is not to ameliorate and uplift; his vision is not that of the ideal world. It is like the best of Byron in its recognition of the unquenchable soul. It

Pearls and Pepper.

is desperate, but not despairing. It is not Childe Harold, but Childe Roland. His way lies through doubt, horror and despair to the cul-de-sac where lies the end, and there, dauntless, he sounds his horn.

To stand upon the defensive in speaking of Hardy's gloomy outlook upon life, to try to turn his pessimism into something else, is to lose sight of the fact that these are the most important elements of his greatness. We do not agree with Hardy, but we love to read him. We have outgrown Thor, Odin and the Twilight of the Gods. Intellectually, we have left Beowulf, Grendel, and the Hall of Heorot far behind us. Emotionally we turn back to them again and again, for they are the epic of our race. Saxon, Dane and Norse are the foundation stones of our racial character; their common heritage was so well established by the eleventh century that the Norman in us is a mere ornament on a well-advanced structure. The German and Scandinavian elements stand five or six to one against the Latin. This unchanged and unchanging heritage of ours Hardy expresses, and it is his first assurance of permanence. The second is the epic quality of the expression, a quality which we feel in the novels scarcely less than in *The Dynasts*. We see beyond the struggle of Eustacia Vye and Clym Yeobright against Egdon Heath, and read of man dependent on the moods of nature. No one reads *The Return of the Native* without feeling that Egdon Heath is just as much a character in it as if it were

The Work of Thomas Hardy.

called Thor or Loki or Saturn, and given a movable bodily shape. Hardy's work is the Anglo-Saxon epic of the nineteenth century just as surely as the *Beowulf* is the epic of the race before its centuries were numbered.



The Fisherman's Path.

I HAVE caught a good many trout first and last, though seldom one that was hard to catch, and never many at a time. Still, I am become so good a proficient in my term of years that I can drink with any fly-fisherman in his own language for the rest of my life. Nimbly and sweetly does the odor of the fish recommend itself to me as I cook it in a sandy place by the stream where the smoke of my tiny fire goes delicately up in whorls of blue and violet among the slanting shafts of sunlight through the pines. But I suspect that the flavor of trout which the true fisherman believes is unsurpassed and unparalleled is mainly the sweet savor of victory. This taste I have not detected in any fish since I was ten years old, and caught what we called pickerel in a pond at the edge of the meadow. It had a few trees about it and was reputed bottomless. We knew no finesse. When we hooked a fish, we yanked him as high in the air as possible. If he landed in a tree, we climbed after him; if in the grass, we ran and fell on him lest he flop back into the water. After the mauling, we grilled the fish savagely over a smoky fire. I have tasted nothing like it since.

The Fisherman's Path.

In those days I knew nothing of the fisherman's path; I had a mind single on the catching of fish, and no other consideration whatsoever affected my notion of the sport. If I caught fish, I was happy and the day was a success. If I caught none or few, meadow, grove and stream had no celestial light, nor did the sounding cataract haunt me like a passion. But now I am sensible of remoter charms, and if a day's fishing leaves me with a light creel, my heart is none the heavier. Whatever dainty morsel my carnal appetite may lack, my inner eye has joy for solitude in the memory of the pure beauty of the "lucid shallows" and deep-hearted pools when the sunlight strikes to their veined and wavering bottoms, pale greenish gold like liquid moonlight. And even of the fish I did not catch (most damning confession) I can think with pleasure, his arrow-like form poised as if by sheer volition against the racing current as a hawk rides the wind, like a translucent shadow—the shadow of a shadow, for the real shade on sand or gravel beneath is more solid-seeming than the fish himself. As for the fisherman's path, if I knew it the less I should have fared the better at breakfast now and then; but I can buy breakfast food (of a sort) at the grocery, and I refuse to starve my imagination for the sake of it. My knowledge of the fisherman's path is cheap at the price.

In much of your fishing, your highway is the stream itself. You wade straight down the middle of

Pearls and Pepper.

it, and by this means as by no other you learn to know the very stream as you know the rug before your hearth or the pattern of the wall-paper of your bedroom. You know its every swirl, riffle and back eddy, every foot of sand and gravel in its bottom, and every invisible rock. Except for its ceaseless flow, the surface pattern of the brook is like a section cut through your cloud of pipe smoke by a thin edge of sunshine that slips past the side of your window shade. When you go to bed after a day's wading, you see this pattern slide along the inside of your closed eyelids, measured off by the periodical tiny splash and ring-ripple of your fly.

Following the highway stream like a shadow, is its closest companion, the fisherman's path. The road, if any such there be in the valley of your trout stream, is said by those who use it to "follow the river," but it does so only at such distance as may be convenient, because it was laid out by a cow or other engineer seeking the easiest grades. The fisherman's path is the stream's exact parallel within a rod's length wherever casting is possible, and, come horse-briars or high water, blackberry thicket or quaking bog, it will not depart far from the water.

I have manœuvred my rod like a trembling antenna through miles of its shady intimacies in New England hills, among birch, willow, alder and white pine, where the oven-bird lashes his whip-like call and veery and wood thrush ripple the cool quiet,

The Fisherman's Path.

along banks knee-deep with royal fern, braken and meadow rue, with here and there a cardinal flower like a spray of signal lanterns. There I have returned to it out of season when the edges of the pools are untrampled; even in winter, when the stream tinkles like a music-box under the snow-cruled ice, when the cascades over the rocks are "domes of many colored glass," and the water shows only in black sluices where it runs too swiftly to freeze.

I have followed it in the Rockies, in canyons lined with aspen, pine and spruce, along roaring streams that come creaming and spouting through rocky gorges and boil up into pools of effervescent green. It winds up the canyon, climbing occasionally over a shoulder when the water churns down between vertical black walls where man cannot go nor fish stop to feed, up to successive lakes of opal and aqua marine, the first of them with gold-green shores and sombre pines and shadows, but higher up there is clean white granite with snow banks and towering naked summits. I have followed it down between red walls and pinnacles, slopes of scrub oak and sliding runs of loose rock, where sun bakes my skin and the smell of pennyroyal rises from my footsteps. But not there did I linger, or often make my catch. My fishing grounds are mine no longer. They were the little mountain "parks" or intervalles at the headwaters, high up under the snow banks, bottomed in deep turf, jewelled with star-in-the-grass, buttercups and

Pearls and Pepper.

flax flowers. Through some the stream laboriously ran a meander pattern, alternating white sandbars and crescent-shaped pools. In others it ran narrow and deep, grass to the very brim, and vertical sides of black soil held in matted grass roots.

Now for me the fisherman's path lies in the Sierras, winding among black-veined pillars, tawny, red or wine-colored, of yellow pine, sugar pine and incense cedar. Or gleaming shafts of white alder line its aisle, down which its companion stream shoots in shimmering cream and jade into boiling pools of mingled green and amber. Camping places are floors of granite sand like rock salt where lupin makes a lambent mist of blue and lavender, pussypaws lift little cushions of pink velvet, or alum-root its impalpable spray. Grossbeak, thrush and robin sing continuously at dawn. Along the water flourishes mountain dogwood, a glorified sister of that which displays its May stars against the dark New England hemlock, and, as its petals fall, the azalea opens its white trumpets. Azalea, willow and young pine and cedar often make the bank impassable, but the stream is laced back and forth with fallen logs, from which one may with convenience but scant security touch with a fly the surfaces of the tempting pools and riffles.

One such path in the season last past lured me far from my tent and hoarded tins of food, up between bare granite shoulders and snow banks until the late

The Fisherman's Path.

sun glowed orange on the peaks beyond the valley I had left. It was no trail to walk in darkness, and the moon was too young to help me down. I camped without bacon or blanket, and through the night dozed, tended fire and watched Charles's Wain trundle solemnly round the pole. My fire illumined the tall clean shaft of a Jeffrey pine and the under sides of the layers of green high up a Douglas fir. Between the two hung Cassiopeia's sketchy chair like a cat's cradle. As soon as the stars faded, I fished for my breakfast; for once I fished in earnest, and for an hour I fished in vain. As I walked back to my campfire, I thought of Piscator and Venator on their fourth day together, with "three brace of trouts" in their creel, making their "brave breakfast" on "a bottle of drink, a piece of powdered beef, and a radish or two." Silly men! It was only perforce that I contented my appetite with what I had left, four walnuts, a heeltap of bread and a pint of vigorous coffee. The next time I really want a fish to eat, I am going back to Pickerel Pond. It is only three thousand miles away—an easy jaunt compared with the distance back through the years.



On the Alleged Tediousness of Defoe and Richardson.

THE neglect of Scott by modern readers has been ascribed by a recent critic, Mr. Chesterton, to "the general sentiment that, like the beard of Polonius, he is too long." Having determined the modern reader's position, Mr. Chesterton, with a few lightning passes of his rapier, stretches his adversary breathless on the field, establishing his author's claim on the reader's attention by the same process which proved so effective in the days of chivalry in establishing beauty and virtue on the part of ladies. The victim of the rapier, if he recovers, will indubitably read Scott, although he may never know why. In the case of the hero of chivalry, one always doubts the permanence of the conversion; how long does the vanquished lover hold to the idea that is hammered into his skull with a battle-ax? The case of the modern reader is different; if he be once fairly embarked on the three-decker, even though he be trepanned, he will not willingly abandon the voyage. It is a real service, then, that the critic performs, not necessarily for Scott, but for the benighted reader of to-day. It is a process which should be extended

Alleged Tediousness of Defoe and Richardson.

indefinitely until converts are made by the score, not for Scott alone, but for the novelists before his time.

If we were to begin with Defoe, it might be necessary in order to bring him within the limits of the discussion to prove in the first place that he is a novelist, and in the second that he needs an apology. For the first, we have no choice but "lightly to avoid," and join issue another day with any who wish to deny it. As for apology, Defoe surely needs none to him who read *Robinson Crusoe* at the proper age, or continues at the proper age through life. Happily there are many such; unhappily it is not quite possible to say that Crusoe's popularity is undiminished in these days of claptrap romance "for boys." Of the four patterns which were once so closely woven into our mental fabrics, the Bible, Shakespeare, *Pilgrim's Progress*, and *Robinson Crusoe*, the Mariner of York comes nearest to holding his old place, because, as the boys who read him say, he is more interesting than the others. Meanwhile, *Captain Singleton* and *Colonel Jack* (vulgarly so termed) collect dust in the limbo of "books behind," while *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana* are kept under lock and key.

There are various reasons assigned for this neglect, but of these the only one which concerns us is the so-called tediousness. This seems to consist in excess of detail; a dust heap accumulation of realistic material, which, when the reader disturbs it, flies about in clouds, chokes him, obscures the story and

Pearls and Pepper.

hides the characters. Taken one by one, the critics tell us, these details are good; accumulated they are bad; like matter out of place they become rubbish. We have it, indeed, on the authority of no less a person than Pooh Bah, that "corroborative detail" is calculated to give "an air of verisimilitude to an otherwise bald and inartistic narrative." This is a sound apology for Defoe so far as it goes, but unfortunately it neglects the important matter of quantity. Too much corroborative detail means too much verisimilitude, which, in turn, means that the fiction which carries it bores us just as life sometimes does. It means lack of selection, craft rather than art, photography rather than painting.

But are not these the very qualities that make *Robinson Crusoe* what it is? If so, why are Defoe's other narratives at fault for having them? Children at least read *Robinson Crusoe* more for its wealth of detail than for anything else. A boy who will carry in his pocket for weeks a wheel from a broken egg-beater, "and it rusty," and finally exchange it for two inches of spring brass with a screw-hole cut in one end, finds his hoarding instinct seemingly justified by the systematic way in which Crusoe toils to carry ashore tons of junk on the plausible theory that you never can tell what you will want on a desert island. The boy reads on eagerly to find out what becomes of it all, and in the case of most of it his curiosity is gratified. So far as the boy is concerned,

Alleged Tediousness of Defoe and Richardson.

all this might take place in New York or London; it is the romance of things, and would still be romance wherever the things were stored. There are cases, too, in which the boy does not grow old with years, but continues to hoard in woodshed, workshop or attic, the works of the superannuated clock, and the thumb-screw from the clothes-wringer emeritus. Does he do it because he read *Robinson Crusoe* when his years were few, or did he enjoy *Robinson Crusoe* because he and his ancestors were pioneers, trained to make what they wanted rather than to buy it? No matter which is cause and which is effect, that soul is own brother to the Mariner of York, whose adventures to him will remain "strange and surprising" to the end of the chapter.

Most of Defoe's readers, however, are not so fortunately endowed with perennial youth. To them the charm of *Robinson Crusoe* lies more in the situation than in the things; more accurately, perhaps, it lies in the happy combination of the two. Many who, unlike the boyish reader, would scorn the commonplace chronicle of commonplace things, finding those same things on a desert island, see them as anything but commonplace. A clay pipe is a sordid affair in the mouth of a workingman on the street; very likely you would not even turn a corner to see one made in a factory. But watch poor Crusoe fashion one out of the raw clay—that is a different matter. It would be an idle moment indeed that you would spend in

Pearls and Pepper.

watching a man build a dory, but put the man in circumstances where a plank costs him six weeks' labor, and your tasks call you in vain till you have followed him through the months of his toil. Commonplace no longer are the sowing and the reaping, the pottery and the basket weaving, when a man stands single and undaunted against every force of nature. To cut the throat of a helpless pig is disgusting; to run a spear into a rushing wild boar is sport. It is danger and uncertainty that makes the commonplace romantic. It is the desert island which makes the ordinary processes of life dangerous and uncertain. Grant all this, and we have still the piling up of details to reckon with, for Crusoe without them would be *Hamlet* without the Prince of Denmark. Given the situation, Defoe's practical mind sets to work systematically, and works out every detail as accurately as a proposition in Euclid. It is like Dr. Johnson's comment on *Gulliver's Travels*, "Once you think of big men and little men, the rest is easy." Given a desert island, the rest is inevitable—if you have a mind like Defoe's to work the problem out. That the mind is no less essential than the situation is demonstrated by the fact that out of all the "Robinsonade" we have had since Defoe, there has emerged not one other Crusoe. And if we grant that the working out of the situation has no less to do with the value of the book than the situation itself,

Alleged Tediousness of Defoe and Richardson.

we grant the value of the heaped-up detail, for that is the very essence of Defoe's method.

"But these details are mere repetitions," says the captious reader. "After I have seen Crusoe dive for old iron, and build his stockade, and make his table and his chairs, I have all the romance I can get out of the situation. The rest is mere piling up of labor to get nowhere." If this is true we must pity the captious reader, for if he lays down the book in this spirit he will miss the finest bit of romance of it all. Let him if he can for once take his cue from Crusoe himself: "A very laborious and tedious work; but what need had I have been concerned at the tediousness of anything I had to do, seeing I had time enough to do it in." Let him assume this spirit if he has it not, and read on. As the details accumulate the time accumulates with them. It takes Crusoe weeks to make a board, months to make an earthen jar, years to make a boat,—as we read we reckon time no more than he, but we feel that there were giants in the earth in those days, and that to accomplish so mighty a work Crusoe's years must have been as the years of Adam. The man begins to assume gigantic stature. He measures himself against all the forces of nature, and one by one he conquers them. The story takes on the color of a myth, in which the hero is the single embodiment of mankind, the thinker and the doer, indomitable in spirit, resistless in physical

Pearls and Pepper.

energy, spreading his dominion over all the earth that he treads.

Such is the glamour of romance which is said to distinguish *Robinson Crusoe* from Defoe's other narratives. In the other books, we are told, there is no such situation to relieve the accumulated details of their commonplace effect. Surely this cannot apply to *Captain Singleton*. What more could we ask than an account of the life and fortunes of a pirate and explorer? for Singleton is the one by choice and the other by necessity. Early in his piratical career, he and a handful of others are marooned on the island of Madagascar; they make their way to the mainland, and strike boldly into the heart of the continent. The first part of the volume deals with their intrepid march through the wilderness to the west coast, whence they return to England. As soon as Singleton has squandered the gold he collected in Africa, he takes to the high seas again, and collects another fortune by preying on Asiatic and East Indian merchant vessels. When he has run the gamut of piratical experiences, he repents, and, after some skillful juggling with his conscience and the possibilities of detection, he gets to England with his wealth, where he lives at his ease. In all this there can be no lack of the possibility of romance. For the first half of the book, too, it is romance of the same type as *Crusoe's*, that of isolation. In the heart of Africa, Singleton and his men are almost as com-

Alleged Tediousness of Defoe and Richardson.

pletely on their own resources as was Crusoe on his island. The two situations may be compared by noting the effect in each of the dominant agent of civilization, money. The money Crusoe finds in the ship he is tempted to throw away, so useless does it appear to him, and he hoards it chiefly from force of habit. Singleton's men find gold and silver rather more useful than other metals to make into ornaments for barter with the natives. Crusoe is only a step farther removed from the world we know than is Singleton. Beyond this, of course, the money test is not significant because of the difference in character between the two men. Crusoe is not a picaro, whatever his critics may say; for the greater part of the book he cannot wander beyond the limits of his island, and if he wishes to be a rascal he has no one to cheat but a naked savage. Singleton does cheat the naked savages; he is a picaro on land and a pirate at sea, and it is just this which makes his sordid acts romantic. For sordid he is even as a pirate. He gives us no deep-throated choruses of "Pour, oh pour the pirate sherry," no buried chests of diamonds and pieces of eight marked by empty-eyed skulls in the trees above. His piracy is an orderly traffic in silks and spices conducted with no more recklessness than one would expect of a sober-minded India merchant. For thrift and sagacity (provided, to be sure, by William the Quaker) it is Benjamin Franklin himself turned pirate. Where is the romance in all this? Obviously

Pearls and Pepper.

in the danger again, the one man single-handed against the world. Singleton's life is not so remote from our experience as is that of Crusoe, but it is nearly as much so, for after all, most of us know almost as much about desert islands as we do about pirates. To a certain extent also, we get from Singleton's labors, from the piling up of the difficulties and the interminable labor in overcoming them, the same effect of epic grandeur that we get from *Robinson Crusoe*. The man wanders and suffers like Odysseus himself; he also is crafty and fertile in expedients. Strongly enough do we feel the romance of such things in Elizabeth's time. Captain John Smith's story of his expedition up the Chickahominy and his skill in preserving his life among the Indians is full of it. We read eagerly the meagre details of Cabeza de Vaca's march from Florida to Mexico, of Juan de Oñate's wanderings in the desert places of our western country. Here is romance, indeed, and Singleton's toilsome journey across Africa is no less. Of the achievements of the American explorers we should be glad of every detail; of Singleton's march we have every detail, and why should we not be glad? Is not here also something of the spirit of "vivid resolute manhood" which makes us rejoice in the exploits of Captain Smith? "But Singleton was a pirate," you say, "he sought gold and not glory." True, and here we had better rest the case than to inquire too closely into the nature of some of Smith's

Alleged Tediousness of Defoe and Richardson.

exploits, or the veracity of his accounts of them. Let it suffice that a strong man meeting toil and hardship is the fibre of both romance and epic. If the fibre be the true stuff, the writer may weave it as fine and close as he will, we cannot have too much. Watch the arduous march of Singleton's men across the rugged continent. They spend a week in collecting material for a raft to cross a swollen river, a month in marching round a desert or a lake. If the acts are petty, the men unworthy, the toil ennobles them. Watch an ant dragging the carcass of a beetle over the corrugated surface of a pine log; imagine the insect's measurement of time to be in proportion to its size, and the labor becomes heroic. So is it when we see men measuring their labor on the scale of eternity.

With *Roxana* and *Moll Flanders* the case is different. No toil could ennoble them—they do not try the experiment. Roxana at the height of her glory is a king's mistress; her knavery is usually on a large scale, and she is usually in affluent circumstances. Moll Flanders moves in lower classes of society. She is a courtesan; as to whether she is a picara or not, opinions differ. Sir Leslie Stephen thinks that her character is not so clearly drawn that we can have any interest in her except for her roguery. Professor F. W. Chandler, whose collection of literary rogues is so far the greatest on earth, declares that she is a clumsy thief, with too many scruples and too little skill to be interesting as a picara. To the impatient

Pearls and Pepper.

reader, then, she may be neither one thing nor the other; interesting neither for what she is nor for what she does. The more patient (or partial) reader may find interest in both. There is in the book very little author's analysis of character, and usually where it appears it is pretty conventional, but it is enough to show what Defoe meant the character to be. For the most part it is not needed; Moll's actions bespeak her character, besides being interesting for themselves. An episode toward the end of the story may be quoted as showing both the analysis and the significant action at their best. Moll meets with a son of hers under circumstances which prevent her from making herself known to him.

"It was a wretched thing [she says] for a mother thus to see her own son, a handsome comely young gentleman in flourishing circumstances, and durst not make herself known to him, and durst not take any notice of him. Let any mother of children that reads this consider it, and but think with what anguish of mind I restrained myself; what yearnings of soul I had in me to embrace him, and weep over him. . . . I now know not how to express those agonies! When he went from me I stood gazing and trembling, and looking after him as long as I could see him; then sitting down on the grass, just at a place I had marked, I made as if I lay down to rest me, . . . and lying on my face, wept, and kissed the ground that he had set his foot on."

Alleged Tediousness of Defoe and Richardson.

A little later she has an interview with him, in which she shows herself scarcely less sentimental, but rather more of the picara.

“I made him one present, and it was all I had of value, and that was one of the gold watches, of which, I said, I had two in my chest, and this I happened to have with me, and gave it him at this third visit. I told him I had nothing of any value to bestow but that, and I desired he would now and then kiss it for my sake. I did not, indeed, tell him that I stole it from a gentlewoman’s side, at a meeting-house in London. That’s by the way.”

Such passages as these show *Moll Flanders* complete as the sentimental courtesan. If, however, she is not complete enough for our impatient reader, if he finds neither character nor action interesting in the autobiographies of Defoe’s two picaras, he may consider the piling up of details in these two books more wearisome than in either *Crusoe* or *Singleton*, for it gives nothing of the heroic quality. It does give us, however, the best qualities these two books have. To most readers, the foremost of these is what might be called the pictorial effect. From an evening’s reading of *Moll Flanders* you get a series of pictures as vivid as if you had been sitting for hours with motion pictures of Defoe’s England flashing and changing before your eyes. There are household scenes in town and country; ordinary persons doing and say-

Pearls and Pepper.

ing ordinary things—and after all it is the ordinary things in the motion pictures that delight the audience. A woman runs awkwardly across the street in front of the procession, a dog stops in the middle of the vacant square to scratch his left ear, it is these the audience watches, and not the hero who is bowing from the carriage. In life, of course, you see only the hero; perhaps that is why the others delight you when you see them in the pictured scene, because they are so ordinary and so prominent. So it is in *Moll Flanders*; suddenly we see in the foreground a brother and two sisters sitting together in a city house after dinner; a servant comes in, and the brother proposes to send her on an errand; the three discuss whether she can be spared; at last she is sent to a certain shop in High Street to bring back two fine neckcloths “that he had bid money for,” “to buy a neck to that turnover that he showed,” and to haggle over the price. There are country roads, horsemen and coaches. There are inn parlors and bedrooms, in one of which stands a pale woman behind the curtain of a lattice window, watching three men ride out of the inn-yard. There are London shops, mercers, haberdashers, apothecaries; there is a jostle, a quick movement, a hue and cry, and we speed through the streets with the pursued thief. Often there is no hue and cry, but still we follow furtively through street after street, to elude even the bodiless possibility of capture. We see a nervous, stealthy

Alleged Tediousness of Defoe and Richardson.

woman leading a confiding child through mazes of alleys and passages. We see a city house on fire, the silly screaming mistress on the stairs, handing bundles of valuable goods to anyone who offers to carry them off. These there are, and hundreds more that crowd the pages of the book, some striking, some commonplace, all clear-cut and memorable, all built up by the same method, the businesslike accumulation of detail. "But all this," says the critic, "is mere photography and not art." Granted, if you will; did Defoe mean it to be anything else? The attempt to answer might lead us far afield. Briefly we can only say that he was first of all a chronicler of facts, and that with all his wanderings he did not step outside the world as he knew it. It is easier to admit that when he created as an artist he builded better than he knew than to believe that when he did not he knew better than he built. It is not fair, then, to find fault with the photographs because they are not something else. If they are good photographs we must needs take them as they are. If we do, objection must cease, for they are good, and good photographs are not to be despised, especially facsimile records of times that are past. Imagine the priceless value of a series of photographs of eighteenth century England, crowded with multitudinous detail, instinct with life, exact in definition!

The charge against Defoe is merely this, that of the three essential qualities of the artist, the sense of

Pearls and Pepper.

form, the sense of fact, and artistic imagination, the dominant one in him is the sense of fact, or realism. In so far as the mixture of the three is not evenly proportioned, the art falls short of perfection. In Defoe's case, the quality that is most conspicuously lacking is the sense of form. Examination of the work of almost any novelist shows that this is usually the last of the three to reach full development in the work of the individual artist. Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, all begin with "sketches" and "scenes." The young writer finds his mind crowded with bits of raw experience—impressions, visual, oral, emotional—without the power of organization which comes in most cases only with maturity. In the work of Stephen Crane, to take a modern instance, we have a series of studies in realism which, toward the close of the writer's life, began to take on organized form. His story *The Second Generation* shows the flood of life and color, once without form, now beginning to run in its channels, and gives promise of what we might have had could it have run on. Like the history of such a writer (except for his untimely end) is the history of the art of novel writing. In England it begins with studies of many sorts, of which the studies in realism are not the least important. In this development, Defoe stands where the waters are beginning to run in ordered channels. He brings the studies in realism to a high degree of perfection, and so far blends

Alleged Tediousness of Defoe and Richardson.

them, consciously or unconsciously, with other qualities that we begin to criticize them as novels.

Richardson's case might seem at first sight far more desperate than Defoe's. For him the beard of Polonius would indeed prove a scant measure. If Scott is beyond the stretch of the railroad novel reader who measures his fiction at sixty miles an hour between Buffalo and Albany, what has such a reader to do with *Pamela* and *Clarissa Harlowe* in prim little rows of four and eight calf-bound volumes? He reads for the story, and we have it on the best of authority that if you read Richardson for the story you will hang yourself. On this count the modern reader very naturally enters a plea of self-defense and abstains. He could not be made to understand the rest of Dr. Johnson's dictum, "you must read him for the sentiment." Whatever "sentiment" may have been in the eighteenth century, it is not enough now to hold us enthralled through eight chunky volumes. Neither would it be easy to show our not impossible reader that the very qualities which make Richardson unreadable to him—femininity, minuteness, length—are the main elements of his strength. Yet such a thesis is not indefensible.

Perhaps it is hardly necessary to say that it is not the plots of Richardson's two great books that make them tedious. *Pamela* is the story of the virtuous serving maid exposed to the solicitations of her master. She resists them as assiduously as they are offered, at

Pearls and Pepper.

first, it appears, solely in the cause of virtue. Before long, however, she appears to be playing a more worldly game, and with such skill that at last we see her "virtue rewarded" by marriage with her master. *Clarissa Harlowe* is of a higher order, both in theme and treatment. Clarissa is persecuted by her obstinate, narrow-minded family, who attempt to force her into a distasteful marriage. Partly from the pressure of these unbearable circumstances, partly through the ingenuity of her lover, Lovelace, she takes refuge with him, only to be betrayed, unable to escape the network he weaves about her. She dies, having refused the marriage which Lovelace, repentant, offers her. In themselves, the situations would seem to contain anything but tedium. It would be a poor novelist indeed, one would say, who would fail with such bait to attract readers. In his own time Richardson had many readers, but to-day we are told that though Clarissa in her own person is divine, she "has but a garrulous and pottering expositor."

The less you read of Richardson the more you feel his defects. Any beginner will see them long before he sees the merits, and in many cases they prove so forbidding that the reader never gets well enough acquainted with Richardson to like him at all. But if you read enough to get past the point where you feel like hanging yourself with impatience, you find yourself reading on and on, you scarcely know why. The reason probably is that though you may not

Alleged Tediousness of Defoe and Richardson.

have known the characters very long, you know them with an extraordinary degree of intimacy. However short may be the period of their lives through which you have followed them, you have learned the minutest details of all that has happened to them, of all that they think about it, and all they think about each other's thoughts through all possible combinations. The result is that they have become as much a part of your life as any of your neighbors, if you still have neighbors in the old village sense of the word. Like your neighbors, they may be commonplace or disagreeable, but you know them so well you cannot help taking a certain gossip interest in all they say or do. You may be glad when you shut the door behind some neighborly Flora Finching at the end of a three-hour call, but you take great pains not to break your neighborly relations with her. If a three-hour gossip with Anna Howe is too much, you can lay her aside without ceremony at the end of one; you are all the more certain to seek her society again before long to gossip with her about what she thinks about what Clarissa thinks about what Arabella thinks of what Clarissa said to Solmes week before last. It is true that by the time you get past the point where you wish to hang yourself in reading *Clarissa Harlowe*, you are quite ready to hang all of Clarissa's family; you feel toward them, that is, precisely as you would feel toward real people who did the same things. And it is at this point that you are

Pearls and Pepper.

ready to find fault with Richardson in the words of D'Alembert: "It is all very well to imitate nature, but not to the point of boredom." True enough, but is it boredom? Boredom is more properly a state in which the emotions are suspended because there is nothing to arouse them. In *Clarissa Harlowe* if emotion is suspended at all it is hung on tenterhooks; so far from being droned to sleep it is in a state of acute sensibility. So is it when you sit helpless and watch Lady Davers badger Pamela. It takes you half an hour or less to read the passage but you feel as if you had listened to three or four hours of it. It has the same effect on your nerves that it has to listen, helpless, to an interminable argument at cross purposes, which, as you think, might be ended by a single well-placed word of explanation. You are on tiptoe to shriek the truth at Lady Davers; at the same time you are very well assured in your heart that it would do no good. Of this you are the better assured when Lady Davers learns the truth, and behaves only the more outrageously. At the end of the colloquy you are as limp and exhausted as Pamela herself; but it is not boredom. Pamela was not bored.

It is the very minuteness, tediousness if you like, of these passages that makes them lifelike. The result is an impression that cannot be effaced. As you follow the fortunes of *Clarissa* you may feel that she might have escaped her fate by appealing to the police, but you know that she had nothing to hope

Alleged Tediousness of Defoe and Richardson.

for from her family. You know them personally; you need not take the novelist's word for it that *Clarissa* was cut off from them. You have seen what took place; you know it of your own knowledge. It is this perhaps that makes us feel so strongly the inevitability of the story, the quality that makes *Clarissa Harlowe* "*le premier roman du monde*." Is it bad art to keep your reader's nerves so long on the stretch? If so, it is a case of the survival of the unfit, for it is an art often practiced since Richardson's time with success. Dickens does it; he puts his child hero through a series of heartbreaking hardships, keeping his reader on the rack until he is in danger of becoming insensible to pain. Then the child gets a brief period of comfort, a meal, and a corner by the fire-side somewhere, and as soon as the reader has recovered his normal tone the hardships begin again. Charles Reade attempts something of the same kind in *Never too Late to Mend*, with less success on the whole than Dickens attains, for he does not so well know the limits of endurance of his reader's nerves.

In the case of shorter novels than Richardson's, Scott's for example, or Thackeray's, much is gained in appreciation by reading them in the leisurely fashion in which they are written. If you read *Woodstock* or *The Newcomes* a chapter a day for two or three months, they will permeate your mind and settle there with an air of finality that makes them yours for better or for worse—inevitably for the

Pearls and Pepper.

better, you will find, if you try the experiment. The effect is an added semblance of life, in which stories move so slowly that they are seldom finished at all. Each one of us knows two or three novels which are being enacted before our eyes. We shall write them as soon as the actors are "so good as to die," but unfortunately there is at least the even chance that we may die first. Meanwhile, if the observer is in a position to know the facts, he learns, while he is waiting for something to happen, all the fluctuations of emotion, and many different points of view on the case. He may feel that catastrophe is inevitable, he may see the tragic error approach and be powerless to prevent it; still on certain days the matter may look brighter than it does on others, and he may incline to the belief that it may come out right after all. So in the case of *Clarissa Harlowe*; probably no one reads the book to-day who does not know the story beforehand, yet the reader enters so minutely into Clarissa's life that his hopes actually seem to rise and fall with hers. Her unconsciousness of her fate is so real as to be almost contagious. It is this unconsciousness, too, together with the very height to which the minuteness is piled, which gives an epic grandeur to the whole. The reader seems to sit above with Jove, watching mortals attempt to evade their fate. Once get this point of view toward the book and you begin to understand what Diderot meant by

Alleged Tediousness of Defoe and Richardson.

saying that he would put Richardson's works on the shelf with those of Moses, Homer and Euripides.

Richardson's feminine characteristics and the feminine quality of his work have often enough been pointed out. Sir Leslie Stephen is not sure that being a milksop is a serious objection to a novelist. Certainly to a novelist who is depicting women, feminine intuition and sympathy are anything but a hindrance. No one denies that it is these qualities in Richardson that make *Pamela* and *Clarissa Harlowe* what they are. In the case of *Clarissa* there is no difficulty, for everyone loves her who really knows her. With *Pamela* it is perhaps a different matter. Fielding called her a politician, a term which carries with it all the scorn Tom Jones would always have ready for chicanery. Look at her sympathetically as we may, however, she still remains the politician. And if she were not a politician what would she be? Nothing, surely, but an impossible pattern of virtue, without one redeeming trait of humanity. That is what Richardson meant her to be, and we who are duly thankful for his failure can attribute it only to his unconscious femininity of character. Is it Richardson or *Pamela* whose sense of honor consists wholly of heroic resistance in defense of purity, and regards such matters as eavesdropping, or the stealing and copying of letters belonging to others, as common-places of protective diplomacy not worthy of even a passing comment? Richardson is as demure and un-

Pearls and Pepper.

conscious in such matters as Pamela herself. The inference is almost inevitable that he *is* Pamela, and that we owe the character to his *naïveté* rather than his skill. Even the divine Clarissa is not without these diplomatic resources, but she does not need them to make her human. Her womanliness has infinitely more of dignity and beauty than Pamela's. Its effect is to make the letters absolutely genuine, a fact which is enough in itself to account for the value of the book. Suppose for the moment that a girl actually had written such letters, and you were to find a trunkful of them in an attic where they had lain for a hundred and fifty years. They would be an intimate revelation of femininity that would hold you spellbound till you had read the last one, regardless of their endless number or their lack of narrative speed. No matter how much or how little of the action one of them revealed, the woman would be there; and that is probably what Johnson meant by his eighteenth century term "sentiment." If so, it is as true now as it was then that we read *Clarissa Harlowe* for a sentiment that Fielding could hardly comprehend.

The minuteness of Richardson's method not only makes his work monumental from the very height to which the detail is piled, but produces also an impression of the passage of time akin to that noted in *Robinson Crusoe*. The effect is heightened by a similar epic quality in the material. There is something

Alleged Tediousness of Defoe and Richardson.

more than the trivial "clatter of teacups" in the story of the testing of Clarissa. It is the old problem of undeserved suffering, the problem which appeared a few years later in *The Vicar of Wakefield*, which appears first of all in the *Book of Job*. Of the three, the *Book of Job* is the most nearly epic, for we have the voice of God speaking to men, and God and Satan discussing earthly matters. But in one particular the treatment of the theme in *Clarissa Harlowe* is loftier than either *The Vicar of Wakefield* or the *Book of Job*. In *Job* the passage sometimes called the prose epilogue describes the restoration to the sufferer of all his worldly prosperity. From a literary point of view this is unsatisfactory; if a modern narrator ended his story so, it would be called an obvious concession to readers who like to have stories end happily. Oxen, asses and camels, in whatever fabulous numbers, cannot compensate Job for what he has gone through. His compensation is the knowledge of the favor of God, and no ending is a fit climax for his sufferings except for God to remove him to more than earthly happiness. Goldsmith miraculously restores to the Vicar his goods and his family, and we know that it is not true to life. Richardson disregarded the entreaties of his friends to bring Clarissa to a happy end. He knew that nothing earthly could recompense her for what she had been through, that anything but death would be an anti-climax. He seems to have been conscious at times

Pearls and Pepper.

that he was treating the same problem as the *Book of Job*. Miss Howe tries to reconcile Clarissa's sufferings with her idea of the justice of God. On Wednesday, May tenth, she writes:

"I wonder not at the melancholy reflections you so often cast upon yourself in your letters, for the step you have been forced upon on the one hand, and tricked into on the other. A strange fatality! *As if it were designed to show the vanity of all human prudence.* I wish, my dear, as you hint, that both you and I have not *too much prided ourselves in a perhaps too conscious superiority over others.* But I will stop—how apt are weak minds to look out for judgments in any extraordinary event? 'Tis so far right, that it is better, and safer, and juster, to arraign ourselves, or our dearest friends, than Providence; which must always have wise ends to answer in its dispensations."

So thought Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar; if you suffer you must have sinned; you cannot avoid the conclusion. In the same letter Miss Howe describes Clarissa's exalted state before misfortune came, and draws a Job-like moral from it.

"You was immensely happy, above the happiness of a mortal creature, before you knew him: everybody almost worshipped you: envy itself, which has of late reared up its venomous head against you, was

Alleged Tediousness of Defoe and Richardson.

awed by your superior worthiness into silence and admiration. You was the soul of every company where you visited. Your elders have I seen declining to offer their opinions on a subject till you had delivered yours; often, to save themselves the mortification of retracting *theirs*, when they heard *yours*. Yet in all this your sweetness of manners, your humility and affability, caused the subscription every one made to your sentiments, and to your superiority, to be equally unfeigned and unhesitating; for they saw that their applause, and the preference they gave you to themselves, subjected not themselves to insults, nor exalted you into any visible triumph over them; for you had always something to say on every point you carried that raised the yielding heart, and left everyone pleased and satisfied with themselves, though they carried not off the palm.

“Your works were showed or referred to wherever fine works were talked of. Nobody had any but an inferior or second-hand praise for diligence, for economy, for reading, for writing, for memory, for facility in learning everything laudable, and even for the more envied graces of person and dress, and an all-surpassing elegance in both, where you were known, and those subjects talked of.

“The poor blessed you every step you trod: the rich thought you their honour, and took a pride that they were not obliged to descend from their own class for an example that did credit to it. . . .

Pearls and Pepper.

"Thus happy in all about you, thus making happy all within your circle, could you think that nothing would happen to you, to convince you *that you were not to be exempted from the common lot?*—To convince you *that you were not absolutely perfect*; and that *you must not expect to pass through life without trial, temptation, and misfortune?*"

Still another of the many explanations of Job's sufferings appears in a later paragraph of the same letter.

"Upon the whole, there seems, as I have often said, to have been a kind of fate in your error, if it *were* an error; and this perhaps admitted *for the sake of a better example to be collected from your SUFFERINGS, than could have been given had you never erred*: for, my dear, the time of ADVERSITY is *your SHINING-TIME*. I see it evidently, that adversity must call forth graces and beauties which could not have been brought to light in a run of that prosperous fortune which attended you from your cradle till now; admirably as you *became*, and, as we all thought, greatly as you *deserved* that prosperity."* "Shall a mortal man be more just than God?" she asks, "Is not your fear of God your confidence, and your hope the uprightness of your ways?" But Clarissa was more patient even than the man of Uz, or

* The italics and small caps in the quotations are Richardson's.

Alleged Tediousness of Defoe and Richardson.

else she was of the same mind as her friend, for she turned not upon her comforter.

To the eighteenth century writer the critic was a noxious worm, a venomous reptile, between whom and the novelist was enmity unquenchable. Now the relations have changed; no longer does the critic bruise the heels of the fathers of the English novel, but the head of him who finds fault. Even that perhaps is allowing him too much dignity. He is not so much the champion proving the love of his master on the body of his opponent, as an humble "barker" standing at the gangplank of the three-decker, begging idlers on the quay to embark on the voyage. "To be sure, she is slow, gentlemen," he says, "but look at the spacious accommodations." The elder novelists have their faults; these the critic need not point out, and cannot hide. They err; surely they are human—and that is not the least of their virtues.



The Simple Spellers.

AN anæmic youth in horn goggles has called on me in the interests of the Simple Spellers. He shamelessly appropriated to himself and his cause two good hours of my time, seeking by processes which, for want of a better name, must pass for argumentation, to enlist me in his army. I suppose someone pays him for his time. I wish someone would pay me for mine; it was the best I had, and it is gone where I cannot recover it. And the gist of his shameless argument was that simplified spelling saves time!

He seemed to be obsessed with the naïve theory that we save time if we don't spend it; whereas everyone who uses time knows that to spend it before it spends itself is the only way to save it. Accordingly I could get no real information from him as to whose time the simplification of spelling would save, or how. The idea seems to be that every time you write *thru* instead of *through* you save a second; and if you write it often enough, you might in the course of some years accumulate time enough for a vacation in Italy or an appendicitis operation. It appears to be based on the fatuous notion that time is money, and can be kept in the savings bank at compound interest

The Simple Spellers.

till you need it. Suppose you write ten thousand simply spelled words a day, saving a second on each, or two hours and forty-two minutes on the day's work. Then you write for two hours and forty-two minutes and save three quarters of an hour more—and so on to infinity. It is subject to diminishing returns, but it goes on forever, and when you get down to split seconds you can take a fresh start. It is a beautiful theory, but it doesn't apply to me. I could never save time by writing *thru*; I should spend infinitely more time trying to remember to write it, and in hating it after I had written it, than I could save were it briefer than the very soul of wit.

I suppose I am an exception in that I am still old-fashioned enough to do my own writing; I am not yet incorporated and speeded up by means of multiple dictaphones and typists. If I were, I suppose I should get five cents a word no matter how they were spelled, and should be glad of simple spelling as a saving in "overhead." I should gloat over the thought that my stenographer, by using simple spelling (if she succeeded in learning it), would increase my profit by a hundred dollars a day. She might save time; a few of her would. But if I know anything about her, she would add it to her recreation periods, and devote it to gazing out of the window. So she will do, anyway. She will have her simple pleasures, nor need I purchase them for her at the cost of seeing

Pearls and Pepper.

my perfectly good English translated into the synco-pations of Josh Billings or Ring Lardner.

But how about the children? Must their little minds be burdened with superfluous letters? or shall they be freed by an Emancipation Proclamation of the Simple Spellers? "If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well it were done quickly." But I do not recall any burden of superfluous letters that weighed heavily on my infant mind. My observation tells me that there are two kinds of people, those who learn to spell, and those who do not; and neither kind worries about "meaningless combinations of letters"—no one does that but the Simple Spellers. Indeed, I question whether learning to spell is a process of memorizing sequences of letters, any more than drawing is a process of memorizing sequences of lines, curves and angles. I do not believe that *through* is seven letters; it is a fact, like a maple leaf that I know when I see it, and with slight training I can draw it with my pencil. With pen or typewriter I make the symbol for the word by a series of reflex motions; I do not count the letters. If you ask me how I know *through* from *though*, I should probably mention the difference of the *r*, but the fact is I know them as I know Uncle Jim from Uncle Peter without consciousness of the distinguishing features. I know that is Uncle Jim because he *looks* like Uncle Jim; you needn't simplify him on my account; I never burdened my mind with details in learning him.

The Simple Spellers.

Spelling is not a craft by itself: it is a part of writing and reading, training of eye and hand. When a boy writes, "Silas Marner was subject to a decease," or, "Gareth was obliged to serve as a nave in the kitchen," he writes what he hears; the fault is not with his ear, but with his visual image of the words. It means that he is not a reader, and is not accustomed to the appearance of the words. To try to teach him the distinctions by lists of letters alone would be about as useless as to try to teach him to distinguish people he never saw by means of verbal descriptions. I doubt if the one system is really easier to learn than the other. I am still to be convinced that the burden of our present system would be sufficiently lightened by the change to compensate anyone for the burden it would certainly be on a generation or two of children to have to learn both systems; and I see no security that the change could be made with less effort.

The Simple Speller has his answer ready. The gain would be in logicality, and to become more logical in any department of life is, he is assured, worth any sacrifice. I have no such assurance. To make spelling logical would be only the first step toward making language logical. Now logic is a good tool where it fits, but it does not fit every contingency of life. It is a good thing in language up to a certain point—which nobody has discovered. If it

Pearls and Pepper.

had been the ruling principle of language from the start, and if our splay-footed ancestors who first began to grunt with meaning could have looked down through the centuries and seen what they were letting us in for, language might have been logical, and we too. In that case we should probably have but one language in the world to-day, one of downright Prussian efficiency, fitted accurately to every service of life except that of imagination. Is that our ideal? If so we must change ourselves first; for if by a gesture of magic we could make our language overnight as logical as mathematics, how long would it stay so with our minds working as they do? The language of a people is like the skin of a man; as a rule, it fits snugly, and it is not often that we can better its fit by taking thought, except as by taking thought we better ourselves.

Indeed, the Simple Spellers are ill-advised to seek more logic till they learn to use better what they have. The only arguments they have offered me are drawn from antecedent probability, which, if I remember my logic, is the weakest argument known, since it is built of inference before experience and buttressed with parabolic evidence. What we want to know about simplified spelling is whether it will simplify life for us and our children; what effect it would have on us as a nation; whether it is anything that would compensate us for the agony of the

The Simple Spellers.

change. Why not look to those who have tried it. The Germans have simplified their spelling as far as a people could without discarding the old symbols. At this time it might be impossible to get a fair answer to the question what the effect of the system has been on the nation, how much time the people have saved by it, and how they have spent it. The French understand themselves pretty well; they have a fairly sure instinct for what they can and cannot make themselves do. In the Year One of the Age of Reason (which was 1792 by dead reckoning) they rationalized by fiat everything in France except human nature and spelling. Human nature then took its course, and before long everything was back where it was before, except for a few matters chiefly political.

Even so do spelling reforms come and go, leaving few traces. You can make a formal garden by rule and compass, but eternal vigilance and labor are the price of it; if you allow yourself the least relaxation, the irregularities of nature will reassert themselves. Simple spelling cannot assert itself by decree; for it has no authority. It must win its way by the consent of the governed, and it has not a winning personality. So far, it has not learned to smile. And if it has a scintilla of imagination, its sponsors would do well to let it show. I do not find simple spelling useful; I know that it isn't beautiful; it isn't even funny.

Pearls and Pepper.


Therefore, my word for it is that of the king to the harper:

“Either ye serve me foot and hand,
Or lift my heart with glee;
Else ye have neither roof nor land,
Nor guerdon get of me.”

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